

# Bachelor Thesis

*Major Tourism*

## Intercultural Communication in Application

An analysis of the degree to which tourism websites reflect conscious consideration of cultural differences

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the potential correlation between integrating knowledge about national cultures and the effectiveness of the computer-mediated communication (CMC) as practiced on the website [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com).

The author has chosen the latter website as her object of discussion due to its prominence as Switzerland's leading web-based provider of information of interest to potential visitors to the country. She has not chosen to take printed publications by Swiss Tourism into account in view of the evident role that web-based sources of information play in today's world; as of June 2014, Miniwatts Marketing Group (2014) affirmed that 42.3% of the world's population uses the worldwide web.

The author's analysis, which included a discussion of the widely disparate cultures of Germany, India and China on the basis of the Hofstede dimensions, revealed that [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) was not considering the impact of said significantly different cultural factors on the effectiveness of their CMC in terms of marketing Switzerland as a travel destination which would be attractive to travelers from those three countries. In fact, it was found that [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) employs translations of one and the same text across the spectrum of their international target markets. In consideration of this perception, the author advances a proposal as to how the designers and writers of the website under discussion could enhance the effectiveness of their marketing endeavours by consciously and explicitly integrating insights into the cultural value and belief systems inevitably influencing individuals from Germany, India and China in the process of deciding whether or not Switzerland should be among their travel destination options.

Significantly, a comparison of [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com) with the official tourism websites of Norway and Australia showed that the Swiss site foregoes an opportunity to create a sense of community and partnership across cultural borders, as an invitation to the citizens of India, Germany and China to personally partake of the value of shared interests, of sharing mutuality by transcending politicisation and polarization.

**Keywords:** Computer-mediated communication, cultural dimensions, cultural bridges, transcending politicisation and polarization

## Foreword and acknowledgments

This Bachelor thesis represents the completion of three years of study at HES-SO of Business Administration and Tourism in Sierre. Instructed by Jacques Gobet, director of Suissco-Innovations in Pully, the author proposed to explore an issue relating to two of her passions, these being intercultural communication on the one hand, and the attractiveness of Switzerland on the other. The author's interest in specific topics such as computer-mediated communication or online marketing further contributed to the choice of subject, as did the lack of substantial studies pertaining to the form and function of intercultural communication in Web Design, in terms of significant added value to a broader audience.

I would like to herewith thank Suissco-Innovations who have created the project Bonding With Switzerland, a concept of intercultural communication based on co-creation which gave me food for thought to define my Bachelor' theme, and more particularly Jacques Gobet and Alain Pillet, directors of Suissco-Innovations, who supported me greatly in understanding the whole Marketing Industry, helped me to reach the right contacts, and provided me with valuable information. My thanks also go to Alexandra Hugo, professor in Human Ressources at HES-SO Valais/Wallis and my thesis mentor, who supported me throughout the realization of this thesis in terms of valuable guidance and counsel. Finally, I would like to thank the following persons who supported me and were involved in one way or another in the creation of this thesis: Mélanie Schmutz, Gilles Dind, Carrol Jordan, Fabian Weber, Lan Zhu and Gregory Root.

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## List of Abbreviations

CMC	Computer-mediated communication
DFAE	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs



## Introduction

The World Wide Web and the Internet permit people from various geographical locations to communicate with one another, share information, and build commercial or interest-based relationships and personal friendships (Cummings, Butler, & Kraut, 2002; Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2005). Different kinds of communities emerge due to this possibility, some of which represent a transitional condition from the virtual to the physical world (Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2005). Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2005) define online community as communication among a group of people “who come together for a particular *purpose*, and who are guided by *policies* (including norms and rules) and supported by *softwares*”. That is where, online communication takes place with the help of various tools such as message boards, chat, e-mail, newsgroups, and more recently websites, all of which make it possible for people to gain knowledge beyond their national borders.

Even if the Internet is a medium used globally, the people who use it or have created it have various backgrounds, live in different habitats, and belong to different cultures. Different styles of computer-mediated communication (CMC) among people of different cultures can lead to misinterpretation and dilemma in communication. Differences in the standards for writing time, dates, addresses, and numbers can also cause confusion. The same goes for differences in symbols, colors, and metaphors. Even a particular style of writing may be considered amicable in one culture and distasteful in another (Hélène Stengers, 2004). It is important to study how people from different cultures behave in CMC, for example as how they choose representations. Due to this approach, you can have more appropriate approach towards users from different cultures in ways that are convenient to their cultural backgrounds.

This thesis aims to explore whether or not the content of [www.myswitzerland.ch](http://www.myswitzerland.ch), Switzerland's official tourism website, in fact does reflect knowledge about and respect for the cultural diversity extant in its various target markets in terms of meaningfully appropriate adjustments to the individual texts, in view of the fact that the texts of the website have been translated into 16 different languages.

It is this author's firm conviction that the decline in inbound touristic activity from India, Germany and China to Switzerland (see Appendix I: Hôtellerie<sup>1</sup>: arrivées et nuitées en Suisse selon la provenance des hôtes) is, at least in part, a reflection of Switzerland's various tourism organizations not adjusting the content of their marketing tools to appeal to said cultures' core cultural values and belief systems.

Parenthetically, the author has chosen to focus on these three countries as they belong among the top twelve sources of inbound touristic activity to Switzerland, and are therefore of particular interest to Swiss tourism businesses.

By way of caveat, the author is aware that Hotellerie Suisse (2014) offers various publications giving information about specific international regions of interest to Swiss tourism authorities, agencies or bodies, whether it be "Swiss Hospitality for Chinese Guests", "Swiss Hospitality for Guests from the Gulf States", or "Swiss Hospitality for Indian Guests".

In terms of our present discussion, however, it must be noted that said publications are not on offer to visitors to [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com), on the one hand, and on the other, that said publications in fact represent a source of country-specific information to Swiss visitors to the site, and are in no way intended, for example, as a marketing tool on the part of Swiss tourism authorities and agencies and bodies with the intention of heightening the appeal of Switzerland as a tourism destination to any of the countries addressed.

# 1. Context and Background

## 1.1. Current tourism situation in Switzerland

The tourism sector is extremely important for Switzerland. In terms of employment, the tourism sector represents an average of 4.4% of jobs (DFAE, nd), with some 30,000 companies being active in this field, and it represents the main source of income of many Swiss SMEs.

In addition, with 15.6 billion francs of export revenue, tourism is the fourth largest importer of Switzerland (Fédération Suisse du tourisme, 2013). If tourism is in fact the main source of growth in the mountain regions and in peripheral regions, tourism business is not to be overlooked: the sector contributes 3% to the economic strength of the country.

However, there has been a decline in Swiss tourism. In 1970, one in eleven Europeans travelled to Switzerland as a tourist. In 2011, the proportion dropped to one European in thirty-one. The decline in international tourism is in fact so marked that Swiss domestic tourism represents 44% of the total mass tourism. Also, in comparison to last year, tourism has declined by 12% in Valais, while Austria saw a 6% increase in its tourism (RTS, 2012). The decline in strength of the euro may represent a contributing factor, but it certainly cannot be the only reason. Overall, Switzerland's tourism was down 2% in 2012.

## 1.2. The value of cultural awareness

As has been pointed out in detail by Carol Southall (2009), people undertake overseas travel to experience and broaden their understanding of different cultures. However, while wanting to experience different cultures, visitors also want or expect host countries to understand and respect their own culture. Many tourism businesses provide their staff with Welcome Host or similar training to ensure they offer a warm welcome to visitors.

Further, Southall (ibid.) mentions that in a rapidly expanding and highly competitive global marketplace, and against the backdrop of the current challenging economic climate, the pursuit of quality has become an organisational imperative for tourism businesses, but that different perceptions of quality make its attainment more difficult, not least because of the very (human) nature of the individuals within the marketplace – both the staff within tourism businesses and visitors. Within the service sector and more specifically the tourism industry,

there is the additional problem of its temporal, spatial and fragmented nature. Major constraints to attaining high quality standards within the tourism industry include cultural pre-conditioning and the preconceptions of tourists themselves.

Moreover, it is argued that there is a correlation between the level of cultural awareness of the tourism business and the subsequent perception of product/service quality on the part of the tourist. Increased customer satisfaction is likely to ensue as a result of enhanced staff cultural awareness and subsequent development of culturally appropriate products and services. Ultimately in today's competitive market it is vital to understand the economic benefits that cultural awareness can bring to tourism businesses.

Both the tourists' and the businesses'/destinations' knowledge and understanding of another culture may hinder or enhance the service exchange. It is important for tourism businesses and destinations to take this into account in the provision of products and services.

The first step to meeting customer expectations is to ascertain and understand them. Understanding the needs and expectations of the consumer and designing products and services to meet these is a relatively straightforward concept, but it is also vital to consider the factors of cultural background and conditioning.

Customer loyalty is often affected by the perception of the level of service provision. It is this perception that will ultimately affect their repeat purchase decisions. Service quality perception and satisfaction is affected by a person's cultural background.

In order to enhance service provision and ultimately attract and retain loyal customers, tourism businesses should be aware of important cultural characteristics, including values, attitudes, language, etiquette, customs and manners (Southall, 2009, throughout 1.2 above).

## 2. The Concept of Culture

### 2.1. Historical development

Over time, humankind has formed communities, whether in the form of families, tribes or countries, with said communities differing from each other in many ways, whether in terms of physical aspects such as architecture or clothing, on the one hand, or on the other hand, non-physical (*metaphysical*, i.e., beyond physical) rituals or traditions reflecting at times greatly divergent value- and belief-systems. The existence and significance of these differences was not considered unusual (even if at times strange), but rather as a fact of life. In fact, it wasn't until recent history that these differences, which in their totality, from community to community, represented that community's identity, were defined as a given "culture" and were subjected to closer scrutiny in terms of such academic disciplines as anthropology and ethnology and cultural studies.

In terms of this thesis' stated intent to analyze the extent to which cultural differences are consciously taken into account in the design of the website [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com), it would seem necessary that we briefly discuss the term "culture" as it has come to be defined since the mid-1990's.

The word culture derives from the Old High Latin "colere" which meant cultivating the land. In fact, until the fifteenth century the word culture was used exclusively to refer to agricultural activity. In the eighteenth century, culture was synonymous with civilization, that is, with institutions created by humankind in terms of creating, implementing and maintaining higher pursuits such as urban development, education, and various forms of artistic expression. It wasn't until the mid-19th century that culture took on a more complex meaning including intellectual and spiritual aspects. In the latter terms, Taylor (1871) defined culture as that "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a company". In other words, the concept of culture expanded to include nearly every expression of humankind's creative endeavours and accomplishments.

Publications and extensive cultural studies dating from the twentieth century show the concept of culture taking on a different light, with various anthropologists and sociologists

beginning to more closely explore and better define its parameters. In 1961, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961/1977), two American anthropologists, offered the first culture studies that systematically analyzed what they identified to be key factors. According to them, “culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of groups of people, including their materialization in object; the essential center of cultures consisting of the traditional idea and especially their attached values”.

Two years previously, in 1959, the American anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1959/1973) had published “The Silent Language”, in which he delved into the concept of intercultural communication by establishing the first theories of cultural interactions. He said, “culture hides more than it reveals something”. For many researchers, Hall is the precursor to the field of intercultural knowledge, the scholar who most accurately describes the general features of culture and cultural dynamics.

It was indeed Hall (1984) who proposed three major features of culture, features which proved essential to the work that would follow in the field. First, he argued that culture is learned, albeit part of human innate biological characteristics, that it is the process of learning that dictates the behaviors that the individual members of a given cultural group evidence, and that it is social institutions such as the family which transmit the elements of a given culture. Further, Hall noted that the various aspects of a given culture constitute a system, i.e., all elements of said culture are interdependent, and that none could be taken in isolation. Finally, Hall pointed out that culture is shared, and as such represents a specific identifier of what are evidently different groups.

Expanding on the three major features described above, Hall stated that cultures are defined both by informal, i.e., subconsciously held rules that in effect serve as behavioral determinants, and by formal, i.e., consciously tangible rules and regulatory measures such as laws.

In the 1980s, research on cultural identities provided several major breakthroughs, most notably in the form of Geert Hofstede’s quantitative comparative study of over 50 countries, which he initiated out of a desire to better understand the evident differences between

international employees in IBM. In most fundamental terms, Hofstede defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or class of person from another" (Hofstede, 2001). During the four decades since Hofstede systematically undertook his studies and analysis, namely the decades during which the present era of globalization took shape, the need for cross-cultural research became ever more evident, and an ever larger number of institutions offering intercultural training on the basis of in the main substantial cultural research have sprung up around the world.

## **2.2. «The Cultural Onion»: manifestations of culture at different levels**

Among various interpretative tools which have become popular in the latter terms, Hofstede's (2001) "Cultural Onion" has proven useful in that its meaning is easily explained and readily grasped.

On the one hand, visible manifestations of culture - the values, rituals, heroes and symbols can be represented by layers more or less close to the surface. Some of these layers are superficial and subject to change. Others are more fundamental and persist through time (see Figure 1).

The first outer layer corresponds to the symbols comprising, among others, words, gestures, illustrations and objects that may have complex origins and meanings but which are understood by members of the culture employing the given symbol. Language, ways of dressing, forms of housing, etc., are part of the symbols. New symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear; symbols from one cultural group are regularly copied by others. This is why these symbols have been put into the outer, most superficial layer of the model.

The second layer, less superficial, is that of the hero. These are the people, living or dead, who are the figures that are very respected by the people of their culture and are therefore a type of role model, influencing to one extent or another the behavior of individuals within the given culture by providing a definition of what the culture could perceive, among others, as good versus bad or successful versus unsuccessful.

The third layer is that of the rituals which are collective activities in a group, which is considered essential. Religious ceremonies and ideologically defined political meetings are examples of rituals in a culture. Rituals may also include discourse; the way language is used

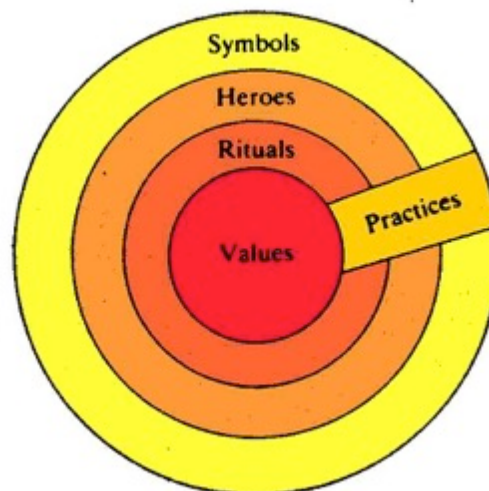
in text and talk, in daily interaction, and in communicating beliefs, most particularly also in the form of non-verbal communication.

These three layers are part of a category called “practices” which include traditions and rituals practices which may be visible to outsiders, but whose essential cultural meaning remains invisible and coherent only to the insider.

On the other hand, in terms of invisible manifestations of culture, at the heart of the Cultural Onion lie the given culture’s core values. On the one hand, Kluckhohn describes a value as “a conception, explicit or implicit, of a particular individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection of ways, resources, and for available actions” (Kluckhohn, 1977). On the other hand, Hofstede would say that values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others.

Looking at the model in its totality, however, the values very much belong within it, and not in a separate model, because values can indeed become visible when they give rise to certain behaviors, hence, the Cultural Onion model does indeed represent various levels of physically manifested cultural factors.

**Figure 1: The Cultural Onion**



Source: Hofstede (2001)

Understanding a culture that is not our own is indeed a complex undertaking in that our tendency to judge and perceive the world around us from the perspective of our own culture is pervasive, as it is indeed unconscious. To understand this concept, it was necessary to study



the latent forms of culture. The study by Hall at this level has been mentioned above, and that of Geert Hofstede will be explained in detail in the following chapter. The author believes that it would be fair to say that both Hall and Hofstede were pioneers, if not in fact revolutionaries, what with their having conceptualized and analyzed the form, function and far-reaching significance of culture in its broadest and deepest sense.

### **2.3. Working definitions**

The term *culture* is difficult to define because it has multiple and often conflicting definitions across different scientific disciplines. After a very early extensive analysis of available definitions and their classification into different categories, Kroeber and Kluckhohn concluded that “culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of the future” (1952).

The roots of cultural differences across nations or societies reach far into the past and can be considered stable in the long term. It could therefore be assumed that they would not change in the near future. Hofstede applies the term culture primarily to national groups, admitting that while nations are not the best way to study culture, they are “usually the only kind of units available for comparison and thus are better than nothing” (Hofstede, 2001).

The author has chosen to focus on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions because his work is widely accepted and cited. In the latter terms, Hofstede’s dimensions have been found to be relevant to web design (Gould, 2000) and aspects of web-based communication. Although Hofstede’s work has attracted criticism, like others, the author feels that his cultural dimensions represent a significant contribution to cultural research and theory. (A comprehensive summary of the arguments for and against the validity of Hofstede’s dimensions may be found in Callahan [2005]).

### 3. Methodology

As a reflection of the discussion of context and background above, the author has formulated the following hypotheses.

#### 3.1. Primary Hypothesis

The author's primary hypothesis is that Switzerland communicates its tourist services in a manner that many non-Swiss tourists do not understand. It is for this reason that the creation of a new model of communication, which is intercultural in form and content, is of paramount significance. To confirm this hypothesis, an analysis of the website [www.myswitzerland.ch](http://www.myswitzerland.ch) will be undertaken, with an emphasis on how to communicate to different markets, products, and tourist services. Specific markets to be analyzed are India, Germany, and finally China, as these three countries contribute to the top five tourist arrivals in Switzerland.

#### 3.2. Secondary Hypothesis

The secondary hypothesis addressed in this thesis is that Switzerland can be more successful in the tourism sector if key markets such as the three mentioned above are motivated and mobilized by forms of communication appealing to potential visitors at the level of their cultural value and belief systems which will be discussed in the following section in terms of cultural levels and dimensions, and later in the paper, in terms of cultural markers.

#### 3.3. Primary Research

In the name of achieving a high degree of objectivity, the author prepared a questionnaire (see Appendix II: Questionnaire sur la communication touristique ciblée; Appendix III: Questionnaire about intercultural communication in web design) and sent it to selected professionals in the Swiss tourism industry, requesting that they respond concisely and candidly.

#### 3.4. Secondary Research

In these terms, both web- and print-based media were consulted and analyzed.

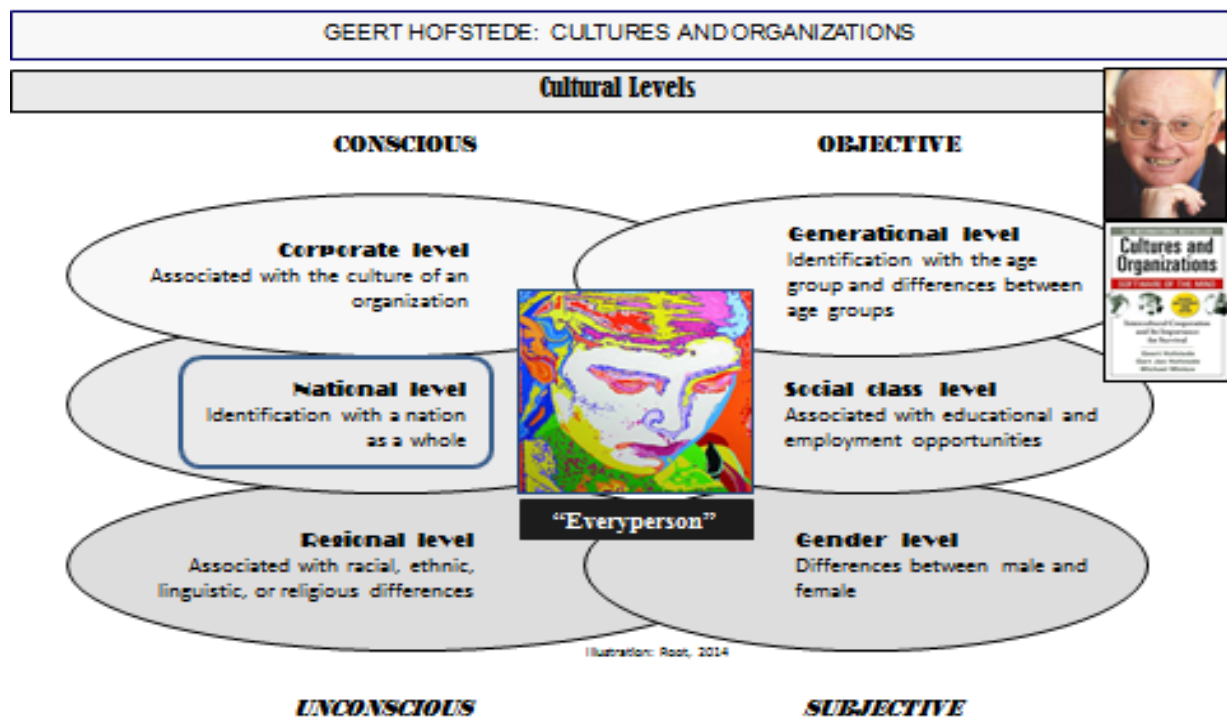
### **3.5. Comparative analysis**

Again in the name of objectivity and in terms of benchmarking, the author carefully examined the tourism websites of both Norway and Australia with an eye to their consideration of cultural differences as an aspect of marketing strategy, comparing those websites to myswitzerland.com in terms of appeal.

## 4. Levels and dimensions of culture

In terms of an overview of Hofstede's discussion and analysis of Cultural Levels on the one hand, and Cultural Dimensions on the other, please see the following two figures (slides by Root, 2014):

Figure 2: Cultural Levels according to Geert Hofstede



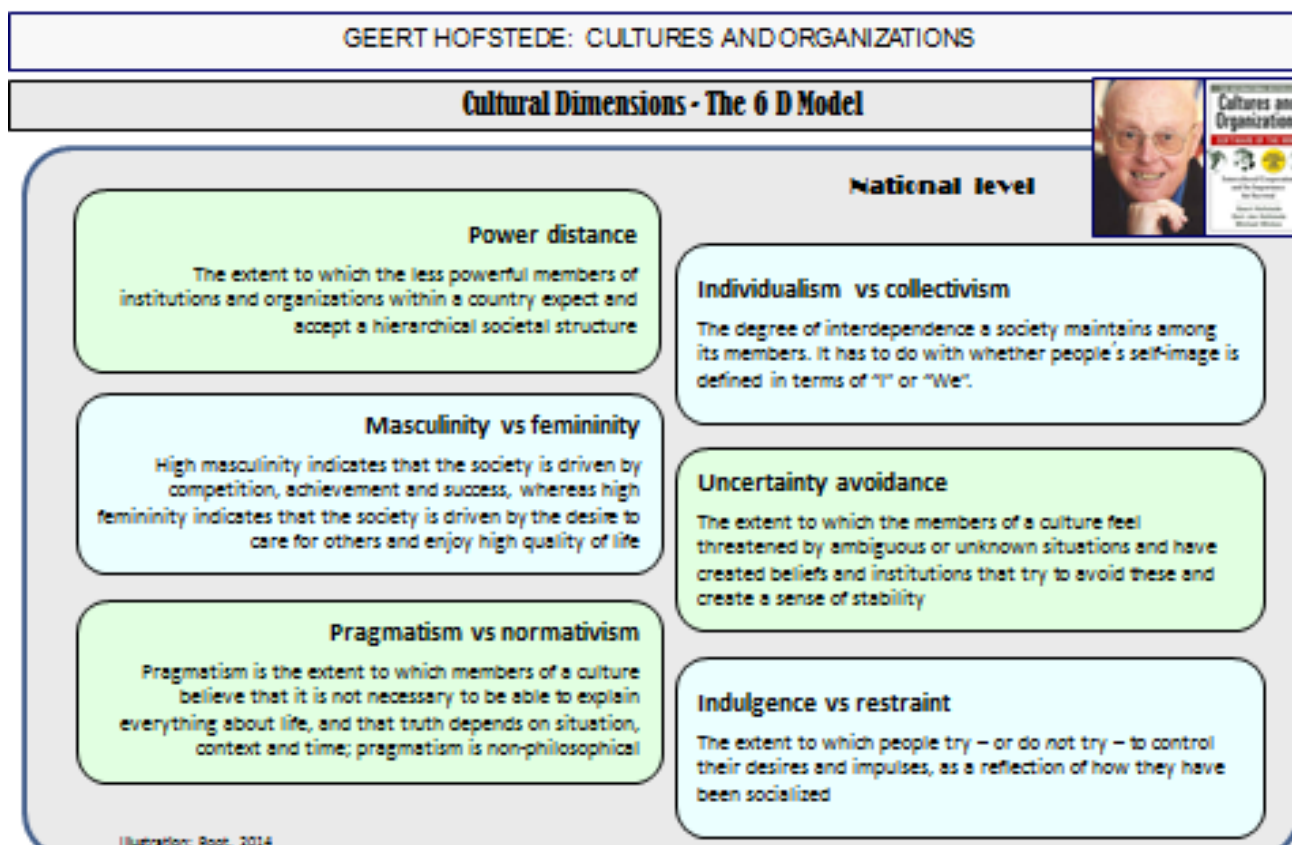
Source: Hofstede, 2010; Root, 2014

Most significantly, it is Hofstede's contention that the six cultural levels which he has identified through his research and which are represented above, are present in each and every human inhabitant of this planet, to one degree or another, hence, Root's integration of the “Everyperson” image in Figure 2, and that these cultural levels may therefore be regarded as transculturally applicable.

In terms of, say, the Regional Level comprising largely unconsciously held cultural identifiers, every culture is characterized by a variety of deeply ingrained value and belief systems constituting as well as reflecting both that culture's *ethos* (approved style of life) and

*worldview* (assumed structure of reality), as discussed by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973). For example, the inhabitants of the island of Java are guided in their daily interactions with fellow Javanese by the unconsciously and implicitly practiced, but also consciously and explicitly invoked concept of *tjotjog* ; to the Javanese, *tjotjog* means to fit, as a key does in a lock, or to harmonize, as can a married couple, at least ideally (Geertz, pages 129-130). In spite of this cultural identifier which is specific to Javanese cultural and society, it should be noted that the lives of most human beings are characterized by similar concepts and traditional postures and behaviors, even if they differ in their specific content from the Javanese *tjotjog*.

Figure 3: Cultural Dimensions according to Geert Hofstede



Source: Hofstede, 2010; Root, 2014

For the purposes of the present discussion, however, the author proposes that it is indeed the six dimensions outlined in Figure 3 above which represent a practical and meaningful framework for a better understanding of cultural differences in that the six dimensions in fact represent dimensions of cultural being and doing which in fact *diverge greatly* from cultural region to cultural region, and that a detailed discussion of said six dimensions could serve as a basis for effective web-based tourism marketing.

In terms of a consistent factor of comparison for analyzing the cultures of India, Germany and China with respect to the six dimensions, a discussion of Switzerland in light of said dimensions follows.

#### **4.1. Swiss culture according to Hofstede**

If we explore Swiss culture through the lens of Geert Hofstede's 6-D Model (2014), we can obtain a significant depth of insight into the deep drivers of Swiss culture relative to other world cultures. It is important to note that the French and German parts of Switzerland can have widely different scores, as can indeed the Italian canton of Ticino.

##### **Power distance**

This dimension deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal – it expresses the attitude of the culture towards these inequalities amongst us. Power distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

At power distance index 34, Switzerland sits in the lower rankings of power distance; hence, it is a society that believes that inequalities amongst people should be minimized. This means that the following characterizes the German Swiss style: Being independent, accepting hierarchy for convenience only, equal rights, accessibility to superiors, coaching rather than prescriptive leaders, and management which facilitates and supports the empowerment of their employees. Power is decentralized and managers count on the experience of their team members. Employees expect to be consulted. Control is disliked and attitude towards managers are informal and on first name basis. Communication is direct and participative.

In terms of this dimension, the French-speaking part of Switzerland, which is very different from the German-speaking part, scores significantly higher in power distance (in fact very similar to France), which means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. Hierarchy in an organisation is seen as reflecting inherent inequalities, centralization is popular, subordinates expect to be told what to do, and the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat. Challenges to the leadership are not well received.

### **Individualism vs collectivism**

The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It has to do with whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". In individualistic societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In collectivist societies people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.

Both German- and French-speaking Switzerland score relatively high on this dimension, giving Switzerland a score of 68, and it is therefore considered an individualistic society. This means there is a high preference for a loosely knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. In individualistic societies offence causes guilt and a loss of self-esteem, the employer/employee relationship is a contract based on mutual advantage, hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on merit only, and management is the management of individuals.

### **Masculinity vs femininity**

A high score on this dimension indicates that the society is driven by competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner/best in field – a value system that starts in school and continues throughout organisational behaviour.

A low score on this dimension means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A feminine society is one where quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable. The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine).

Switzerland scores 70 in this dimension, with both rankings for German speaking Switzerland and the French speaking of the country indicating a masculine society – highly success oriented and driven, albeit that in the German speaking part the impact is much more noticeable. In masculine countries, people "live in order to work", managers are expected to be decisive, and the emphasis is on equity, competition and performance. Conflicts are resolved by fighting them out.

### **Uncertainty avoidance**

This dimension has to do with the way a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen? This ambiguity brings with it anxiety and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways. The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these is reflected in the uncertainty avoidance score.

Switzerland scores 58 in uncertainty avoidance, perhaps reflecting the difference between the French and German parts. French-speaking Switzerland has a strong preference for avoiding uncertainty while German-speaking Switzerland scores lower. Countries exhibiting high uncertainty avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. In these cultures, there is an emotional need for rules (even if the rules never seem to work) time is money, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation may be resisted, security is an important element in individual motivation. Decisions are taken after careful analysis of all available information.

### **Pragmatism vs normativism**

This dimension describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future, and societies prioritise these two existential goals differently. Normative societies who score low on this dimension, for example, prefer to maintain time-honoured traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. Those with a culture which scores high, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future.

With a high score of 74, Swiss culture is definitely pragmatic. In societies with a pragmatic orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions easily to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, practicing thriftiness and perseverance in achieving results.



### **Indulgence vs restraint**

One challenge that confronts humanity, now and in the past, is the degree to which children are socialized. Without socialization we do not become “human”. This dimension is defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised. Relatively weak control is called “indulgence”, and relatively strong control “restraint”. Cultures can, therefore, be described as indulgent or restrained.

Switzerland scores high in this dimension, with its score of 66 indicating that the culture is one of indulgence. People in societies classified by a high score in indulgence generally exhibit a willingness to realise their impulses and desires with regard to enjoying life and having fun. They possess a positive attitude and have a tendency towards optimism. In addition, they place a higher degree of importance on leisure time, act as they please, and spend money as they wish.

#### **4.2. Indian culture according to Hofstede**

With Hofstede’s analysis of Switzerland in mind, Indian culture as seen through the lens of the 6-D Model in terms of deep drivers of Indian culture relative to other world cultures becomes clear.

### **Power distance**

India scores high in this dimension – 77 –, with said high score indicating an appreciation for hierarchy and a top-down structure in society and organizations. If one were to characterize the Indian attitude, one could use the following words and phrases: dependent on the boss or the power holder for direction, acceptance of unequal rights between the power-privileged and those who are lower down in the pecking order, immediate superiors accessible, but palpably not on the same level, paternalistic leadership, management directives rather than recommendations, assuming the role of giving reason and meaning to one’s work life, and rewards in exchange for loyalty from employees. Real power is centralized even though it may not appear to be, and managers count on the obedience of their team members. Employees expect to be directed clearly as to their functions and what is expected of them. Control is familiar, even a form of psychological security, and attitude towards managers are formal even if one is on first name basis. Communication is top down and directive in its style, and often feedback which is negative does not find its way to the top of

the ladder.

### **Individualism vs collectivism**

India, with a rather intermediate score of 48, is a society with both collectivistic and individualistic traits. The collectivist side means that there is a high preference for belonging to a larger social framework in which individuals are expected to act in accordance to the greater good of one's defined in-group(s). In such situations, the actions of the individual are influenced by various concepts such as the opinion of one's family, extended family, neighbours, work group and other such wider social networks that one has some affiliation toward. For a collectivist, to be rejected by one's peers or to be thought lowly of by one's extended and immediate in-groups, leaves him or her rudderless and with a sense of intense emptiness. The employer/employee relationship is one of expectations reflecting expectations – loyalty from the employee and almost familial protection from the employer. Hiring and promotion decisions are often made based on relationships which are the key to everything in a collectivist society.

The individualistic aspect of Indian society is seen as a result of its dominant religion/philosophy - Hinduism. The Hindus believe in a cycle of death and rebirth, with the manner of each rebirth being dependent upon how the individual lived the preceding life. People are, therefore, individually responsible for the way they lead their lives and the impact it will have upon their rebirth. This focus on individualism interacts with the otherwise collectivist tendencies of the Indian society which leads to its intermediate score on this dimension.

### **Masculinity vs femininity**

India scores 56 on this dimension and is thus considered a masculine society. India is actually very masculine in terms of a visual display of success and power. The designer brand label, the flash and ostentation that goes with advertising one's success, is widely practiced. However, India is also a spiritual country with millions of deities and various religious philosophies. It is also an ancient country with one of the longest surviving cultures which gives it ample lessons in the value of humility and abstinence. This often reins in people from indulging in masculine displays to the extent to which they might otherwise be naturally inclined. Again, in more masculine countries, the focus is on success and achievements,

validated by material possessions. Work is the center of one's life, and visible symbols of success in the work place are very important and common.

### **Uncertainty avoidance**

India scores 40 on this dimension and thus has a medium to low preference for avoiding uncertainty. In India, there is acceptance of imperfection; nothing has to be perfect nor has to go exactly as planned. India is traditionally a patient country where tolerance for the unexpected is high; even welcomed as a break from monotony. People generally do not feel driven and compelled to take action-initiatives and comfortably settle into established roles and routines without questioning them. Rules are often in place just to be circumvented, and one relies on innovative methods to "bypass the system". A word used often is "adjust" and means a wide range of things, from turning a blind eye to rules being flouted to finding a unique and inventive solution to a seemingly insurmountable problem. It is this attitude that is both the cause of misery as well as the most empowering aspect of the country. There is a saying that "nothing is impossible" in India, so long as one knows how to "adjust".

### **Pragmatism vs normativism**

India has a score of 51 on this dimension, which indicates a preference for a more long-term, pragmatic culture. In India the concept of "karma" dominates religious and philosophical thought. Time is not linear, and thus is not as important as to western societies which typically score low on this dimension. Countries like India have a great tolerance for religious views from all over the world. Hinduism is often considered a philosophy more than even a religion; an amalgamation of ideas, views, practices and esoteric beliefs. In India there is an acceptance that there are many truths which often depend on the seeker's interpretation. Societies that have a high score on pragmatism typically forgive a lack of punctuality, a changing game plan based on a changing reality, and a general comfort with discovering the fated path as one goes along rather than playing to an exact plan.

### **Indulgence vs restraint**

India receives a low score of 26 in this dimension, meaning that it is a culture of restraint. Societies with a low score in this dimension have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism. Also, in contrast to indulgent societies, restrained societies do not put much emphasis on leisure time and control the gratification of their desires. People with this orientation have the

perception that their actions are restrained by social norms and feel that indulging themselves is somewhat wrong.

#### **4.3. German culture according to Hofstede**

If we view the German culture from the 6-D Model perspective, we can more deeply understand German culture as it relates to other world cultures.

##### **Power distance**

Highly decentralised and supported by a strong middle class, Germany is not among the lower power distant countries (score 35). Co-determination rights are comparatively extensive and have to be taken into account by the management. A direct and participative communication and meeting style is common, control is disliked, and leadership is challenged to show expertise and best accepted when it's based on it.

##### **Individualism vs collectivism**

The German society is a truly individualistic one (67). Small families with a focus on the parent-children relationship rather than aunts and uncles are most common. There is a strong belief in the ideal of self-actualization. Loyalty is based on personal preferences for people as well as a sense of duty and responsibility. This is defined by the contract between the employer and the employee. Communication is among the most direct in the world following the ideal to be "honest, even if it hurts" – and by this giving the counterpart a fair chance to learn from mistakes.

##### **Masculinity vs femininity**

With a score of 66 Germany is considered a masculine society. Performance is highly valued and required early on in life as the school system separates children into different types of schools at the age of ten. People rather "live in order to work" and draw a lot of self-esteem from their tasks. Managers are expected to be decisive and assertive. Status is often shown, especially in the form of cars, watches, and technical devices.

##### **Uncertainty avoidance**

Germany is among the uncertainty avoidant countries (65); the score is on the high end, so there is a definite preference for uncertainty avoidance. In line with the philosophical heritage

of Kant, Hegel and Fichte, there is a strong preference for deductive rather than inductive approaches, be it in thinking, presenting or planning: a systematic overview has to be given in order to proceed. This is also reflected in the legal system. Details are equally important to create certainty that a certain topic or project is well-thought-out. In combination with their low power distance, where the confidence in one's own decisions is not preempted by the greater responsibility of the boss, Germans prefer to compensate for their higher uncertainty by strongly relying on personal expertise, both their own and that of their employees.

### **Pragmatism vs normativism**

Germany's high score of 83 indicates that it is a pragmatic country. In societies with a pragmatic orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions easily to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results.

### **Indulgence vs restraint**

The low score of 40 on this dimension indicates that the German culture is restrained in nature. Societies with a low score in this dimension have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism. Also, in contrast to indulgent societies, restrained societies do not put much emphasis on leisure time and control the gratification of their desires. People with this orientation have the perception that their actions are restrained by social norms and feel that indulging themselves is somewhat wrong.

## **4.4. Chinese culture according to Hofstede**

Again choosing the perspective of the 6-D Model, we can obtain a good overview of the deep drivers of Chinese culture relative to other world cultures.

### **Power distance**

At 80, China sits in the higher rankings of power distance, i.e., it is a society that believes that inequalities among people are acceptable. The subordinate-superior relationship tends to be polarized, and there is no defense against power abuse by superiors. Individuals are influenced by formal authority and sanctions and are in general optimistic about people's capacity for leadership and initiative. People should not have aspirations beyond their rank. In recent history, there have been indications of change in the form of the government cracking

down on corruption among high officials, but it remains to be seen if there will be a relativization, that is, relative democratization of the political power in the country.

### **Individualism vs collectivism**

With a score of 20, China is a highly collectivist culture where people act in the interests of the group and not necessarily of themselves. In-group considerations affect hiring and promotions with closer in-groups (such as family) receiving preferential treatment. Employee commitment to the organization (but not necessarily to the people in the organization) is low. Relationships with colleagues are cooperative for in-groups, while out-groups are met with hostility. Personal relationships prevail over task and company.

### **Masculinity vs femininity**

At 66, China is a masculine society, that is, China is success oriented. The need to ensure success can be exemplified by the fact that many Chinese will sacrifice family and leisure priorities to work. Service people (such as hairdressers) will provide services until very late at night. Leisure time is not so important. Laborers or farmworkers will leave their families behind and migrate to faraway places in order to obtain better work and pay in the cities. Another example is that Chinese students care very much about their exam scores and ranking, as this is the main criterion to achieving success.

### **Uncertainty avoidance**

At 30, China has a low score on uncertainty avoidance. Truth may be relative, though in familiar social circles there is concern for truth in an absolute sense, and rules (if not necessarily formally pronounced laws) abound. Nonetheless, adherence to laws and rules which may be flexible to suit the actual situation and pragmatism is a fact of life. The Chinese are comfortable with ambiguity; the Chinese language is full of ambiguous meanings that can be difficult for Western people to follow. The Chinese are adaptable and entrepreneurial. At the time of writing, the majority (70% -80%) of Chinese businesses tends to be small to medium-sized and family owned.

### **Pragmatism vs normativism**

China scores 87 in this dimension, which means that it is a very pragmatic culture. In societies with a pragmatic orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on

situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions easily to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, and perseverance in achieving results.

### **Indulgence vs restraint**

China is a restrained society as can be seen in its low score of 24 in this dimension. Societies with a low score in this dimension have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism. Also, in contrast to indulgent societies, restrained societies do not put much emphasis on leisure time and control the gratification of their desires. People with this orientation have the perception that their actions are restrained by social norms and feel that indulging themselves is wrong.

### **4.5. Diagrammatic comparison**

In the following, Hofstede's analysis regarding the interpretation of the dimensions as previously discussed in terms of the three countries under discussion in direct comparison with Switzerland is given with the respective highest score highlighted in bold:

**Table 1: Summary of results of Hofstede Dimensions**

	Switzerland	Germany	China	India
Power Distance  Acceptance of social inequality and hierarchy	34	35	<b>80</b>	77
Masculinity vs femininity  The extent to which masculine values as assertiveness, competition, urge for achievement and success prevail in comparison to more feminine values such as life quality, nurturing, helpfulness and solidarity	<b>70</b>	66	66	56

<b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b>  The degree to which individuals tend to avoid ambiguous situations and to take risks when making decisions	<b>58</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Individualism vs collectivism</b>  The degree to which ties between members of a community are rather loose (i.e., individualistic) or tight (i.e., collectivistic)	<b>68</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Pragmatism vs normativism</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Indulgence vs restraint</b>  Related to the gratification versus control of basic human desires related to enjoying life.	<b>66</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>

Source: Author's table with data from Hofstede's website

In terms of the significance of the highest values highlighted above for a better understanding of the cultural region and an appropriate and accurate representation thereof with respect to effective culture-specific marketing, we may summarize as follows:

China, with a high Power Distance index of 80, can be characterized as a society in which the majority of the population accepts the chasm between the leading class and the rest of the society as is typical of a severely hierarchical system.



Switzerland, with a high degree of Masculinity as opposed to Femininity, is characterized, on the one hand, by the male population seeking success by way of competitive enterprise as opposed to pursuing quality of life (as is typical of a society with a high degree of femininity), and on the other hand, by a great divergence between male values and female values in general.

Germany, with a high degree of Uncertainty Avoidance, may be described as a society which has developed a comprehensive system of laws and rules and regulations as a response to an historical depth of existential threat to the society, in the main through political, ethnographic and cultural upheaval over centuries.

Switzerland, with a high score in terms of Individualism vs Collectivism, may perhaps be best understood as a society in which freedom of personal expression and personal mobility is cherished, and in which community ties are not nearly as closely knit as in collectivistic societies.

China, with a very high score in Pragmatism vs Normativism, tends to reflect a non-interpretative, non-personal response to changes, i.e., acceptance of things as they happen, without necessarily seeking to understand their deeper meaning in a philosophical sense, as is the case in normative societies.

Switzerland, with a relatively high score in Indulgence vs Restraint, may be described as a society in which many members pursue gratification of the senses, as an expression of a more unfettered enjoyment of life than is the case in societies in which greater restraint is exercised in terms of their daily lifestyles.

## 5. Indicators of Hofstede's dimensions in website design

### 5.1. Diagrammatic comparison

The following findings reflect an analysis of international university homepages with said analysis focussing on two criteria, organization and graphical design, and seeking to identify “cultural markers typical of specific cultures” (Callahan, 2006).

Of major significance in our present context is the fact that the university homepages under discussion were in fact investigated as to the effectiveness of their appeal to international student audiences under consideration of said cultural markers. It should be noted that some of the university homepages examined made greater efforts than others to consider the aspect of language congruence, i.e., universities wishing to appeal to students from South Korea translated their program offerings, etc., into Korean.

In terms of utilizing these findings in a tourism website context as a reflection of wishing to draw more visitors from a given cultural region, e.g., myswitzerland.com wishing to more effectively appeal to potential visitors from China, the fact that China is characterized by a high degree of Power Distance – see Table 1 – would implicate, with reference to Table 2, that a website wishing to appeal to Chinese people would include illustrations of monumental buildings (in the Swiss context, a photograph of the Palais Fédéral [Federal Palace] in Bern). Further, photographs of national political figures (in the Swiss context, a photo of Didier Burkhalter, currently Swiss Federal President) or photographs of Swiss celebrities known to the Chinese, e.g., Roger Federer, would be of particular interest in these terms.

Similarly, appealing to an Indian audience would implicate appealing to the Indians' respect for the value of cultural traditions and religious rituals in terms of those cultural markers being a reflection of High Power Distance and India scoring high on the Power Distance scale.

**Table 2: Web site characteristics in relation to Hofstede's dimensions of culture**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Sources</b>
<b>Power Distance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symmetry</li> <li>• Tall hierarchies</li> <li>• Focus on official seal, national emblems</li> <li>• Photographs of leaders</li> <li>• Monumental buildings</li> <li>• Monuments</li> <li>• Religious rituals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asymmetry</li> <li>• Shallow hierarchie</li> <li>• Photos of speople rather than buildings</li> <li>• Images of both genders</li> <li>• Images of public space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marcus and Gold (2000)</li> <li>• Ackermann (2002)</li> </ul>
<b>Masculinity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited choices</li> <li>• Orientation toward goal</li> <li>• Emphasis on tradition and authority</li> <li>• Frequent image of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple choice</li> <li>• Orientation toward relationship</li> <li>• Frequent image of people having fun together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ackermann (2002)</li> <li>• Dormann and Chisalita (2002)</li> </ul>

	building		
<b>Uncertainty avoidance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restricted amount of data</li> <li>• Limited scrolling</li> <li>• References to daily life</li> <li>• Redundancy</li> <li>• Limited choices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long page with scrolling</li> <li>• Abstract images</li> <li>• Variety of choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marcus and Gold (2000)</li> </ul>
<b>Individualism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Images of happy individuals</li> <li>• Images of young people</li> <li>• Emphasis on action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Images of groups</li> <li>• Images of aged and experienced people</li> <li>• Emphasis on state of being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marcus and Gold (2000)</li> </ul>

Source: E. Callahan (2006).

To further substantiate the findings above, with specific reference to website design and therefore of particular significance in our present context, the author holds reference to research conducted with a focus on High Power Distance, High Collectivism, High Femininity, and High Uncertainty Avoidance.

## 5.2. Indicators of High Power Distance in Website Design

- Symmetrical design of the web page (Marcus, 2002, Callahan, 2006).
- Frequent use of photos of buildings, departments and the logo of the university rather than people and students in their daily informal activities (Marcus, 2002).
- Concentration on prominent people, whether in the fields of politics, economics, or sociology, or professors as opposed to students in the appearance and content of website (which conveys a sense of inequality and organizational hierarchy) (Marcus, 2002; Dormann and Chisalita, 2002).
- Focus on religions and traditions with repeated use of religious and national symbols (Marcus, 2002).
- Organizing large amounts of information in a vertical or tall hierarchical order without attention to the importance and relationship of the information in their classification method, i.e., simply a long list of data and facts (Marcus, 2002).
- Structured/controlled access to the information with limited options (Marcus, 2002).
- Error messages phrased in a harsh tone rather than supporting and assisting messages (Marcus, 2002).

- Obvious and compulsory restrictions in the access of the information and security issues such as using IDs and passwords (Marcus, 2002; Robbins & Stylianou, 2002)

### **5.3. Indicators of High Collectivism in Website Design**

- Photos of elderly and experienced people as opposed to youth (Marcus, 2002; Rajkumar, 2003; Callahan 2006).
- Pictures and symbols of political, social or collective/group achievements in comparison with individual accomplishments (Marcus, 2002; Rajkumar, 2003; Callahan 2006).
- Focusing on experiences, traditions and religions rather than current special issues (Marcus, 2002).
- Using formal terminology in the passive voice instead of direct and informal language in active voice (Rajkumar, 2003).
- Lack of use of argumentative and hyperbolic phrases (Marcus, 2002; Rajkumar, 2003).
- Addressing organizational issues rather than market-oriented subjects (Marcus, 2002).
- Restricted conventional access methods and options as opposed to a variety of customizable options such as enabling users to express their personal opinion (Robbins and Stylianou, 2002).
- Lack of respecting users' privacy in different ways, for example enabling them to protect their privacy, to register in order to get access to some sections, and to use secured connections (Marcus, 2002).

### **5.4. Indicators of High Femininity in Website Design**

- Demonstrating some tendencies towards family and relationship (quality of life) rather than competition and domination (quantity of life), for instance showing symbols of money, possessions, and success, such as financial reports (Robbins & Stylianou, 2002).
- Making use of feminine colors and pictures, for instance, showing students talking, studying and laughing together rather than masculine colors, photos and animations that express symbols of power and traditions, such as buildings (Marcus, 2002; Dormann & Chisalita, 2002; Callahan 2006).
- Demonstrating some indications of social and cultural sensitivity, as a sign of caring for others (Dormann & Chisalita, 2002; Marcus, 2002).
- Focusing on details rather than providing a holistic view.

- Concentrating on attractive form of design rather than focusing on functionality and effectiveness of design (Marcus, 2002).
- Variety of choices with an attitude towards a cooperative relationship and information exchange, as opposed to limited similar options leading towards certain goals and getting quick results (Marcus, 2002).
- Organizing information based on social structures rather than business- and task-oriented views, with an executive attitude (Marcus, 2002).
- Emphasizing equality and similarity between genders and ignoring the distinction between them, e.g., showing hardworking, ambitious women or modest, sensitive men as opposed to emphasizing gender distinction, i.e., making explicit gender-specific tones and expectations (Marcus, 2002).

### **5.5. Indicators of High Uncertainty Avoidance in Website Design**

- Making use of vertical design rather than horizontal design of web pages (Marcus, 2002; Callahan, 2006).
- Clear and understandable organization of the information (Marcus, 2002).
- Providing users with different forms of clues to minimize ambiguity, such as using color codes and dedicated fonts (Marcus, 2002).
- Limited amount of information with little scrolling rather than long pages with a lot of scrolling (Marcus, 2002).
- Simple navigation system with complete and precise user interactions, providing clear feedback regarding the status of the users, as well as providing clear help and the sitemap, as opposed to complicated navigation system with limited control that encourages users to surf and browse, open new tabs and windows, as well as abstract help and limited feedback (Marcus, 2002).
- Focus on rules, discipline and formalities rather than flexibility, informality, ambiguity and change (Marcus, 2002).
- Simple and clear interface design of the website with consistent familiar objective and tangible symbols relating to people's daily lives as opposed to various unfamiliar abstract pictures and symbols (Marcus, 2002).

To recapitulate in terms of the author's primary hypothesis and with reference to the research findings by Callahan and Marcus in particular, the consideration of such cultural markers (or dimensions according to Hofstede) in website design, such as the design of a tourism homepage, could be considered essential to the effectiveness of said homepage in term of attracting specific target markets.

## 6. Discussion and summary of primary research

In terms of an analysis of five interviews conducted by the author with tourism professionals with the intent of establishing the viability or lack thereof of the author's thesis statement, said thesis statement is reiterated at this point: "This thesis aims to explore whether or not the content of [www.myswitzerland.ch](http://www.myswitzerland.ch), Switzerland's official tourism website, in fact does reflect knowledge about and respect for the cultural diversity extant in its various target markets in terms of meaningfully appropriate adjustments to the individual texts." The following summaries therefore focus on the individual interviewees' opinion about the author's approach to this investigation, on the one hand, and the author's view that said website is lacking in culture-specific information.

### 6.1. Interview with Mélanie Schmutz, Web and Social Media, Fribourg Region

With specific regard to the tourism website of the Fribourg Region, and not with regard to the website under discussion, Ms. Schmutz finds herself agreeing with the importance of cultural content in any media designed as a tool of intercultural communication, such as a tourism website. More specifically, Ms. Schmutz points out that the cultural identity of the individual visitor to the website determines, to a large degree, how said visitor responds to the website's content, and that a culture- and language-specific structure of the website is essential to the website's appeal to the individual visitor. In these terms, Ms. Schmutz finds it unfortunate that purely financial restrictions limit Fribourg Region's ability to be more appealing to a greater number of countries. For example, Fribourg Region's website is available only in French, German and English, even though the website's administrators realize that an Italian version would be essential in that Italy is an important market for the region, and that other markets such as Spain are not appealed to for lack of a Spanish version.

Nota bene: Please see Appendix IV for the complete questionnaire.

## **6.2. Interview with Gilles Dind, Director of Western Europe, Swiss Tourism**

In essence, Mr. Dind deplores the lack of culture-specific information on the website under discussion in that, in his words (translated from the French by the author), “it is necessary to adapt the message to the audience; a Japanese does not have the same needs as a Chinese or German.” In the latter terms, he emphasizes that the website in question lacks appeal in that it simply translates one and the same text into any number of languages, without any culture-specific modification of the text’s content. Further, to again quote Mr. Dind (translation by the author): “In addition, we must attempt to build bridges, play with the cultural link in order to grow in sympathy and attractiveness.” Finally, Mr. Dind points out that in addition to culture-specific content, a website’s individual sections would in fact need to also be designed to appeal aesthetically to a particular market, but that such a degree of differentiation and adjustment would, in real-world terms, be simply unfeasible.

Nota bene: Please see Appendix V for the complete questionnaire.

## **6.3. Interview with Carrol Jordan, lecturer in Intercultural Communication at HES-SO Valais Wallis**

As already mentioned in the context of the interviews with Ms. Schmutz and Mr. Dind, Ms. Jordan agrees that “promoting, advertising should emphasize the specific needs, themes of the different tourists from different countries. For example, marketing strategies for Asian tourists should focus on team spirit, as group traveling and the needs for family. For Asians also security is very important and they love shopping.” With regard to the website under discussion, Ms. Jordan found that no such accommodation of culture-specific preferences and characteristics was evident.

Nota bene: Please see Appendix VI for the complete questionnaire.

## **6.4. Interview with Dr. Fabian Weber, Project Manager Research hotelleriesuisse**

On the one hand, Dr. Weber admits that the complexity of an increasingly international world does represent a challenge to forms and content of electronic communication. On the other hand, Dr. Weber claims that it is less a question of the present website’s attractiveness

than Switzerland's evident appeal in terms of its reputation and natural beauty that draws touristic visitors to the country.

Nota bene: Please see Appendix VII for the complete questionnaire.

#### **6.5. Interview with Lan Zhu, coordinator of Sino-Swiss relations, Oright Sarl Sierre**

Ms. Zhu agrees that electronic media play a significant role in today's world of intercultural communication. However, she maintains, admittedly astutely, that cultural diversity is not an issue among Swiss travellers within Switzerland, and that foreign visitors experience culture as they travel, without a need for prior information.

Nota bene: Please see Appendix VIII for the complete questionnaire.

Altogether, it seems that there is agreement on the part of all five interviewees that the intercultural nature of today's world presents undeniable challenges to various forms of electronic communication, particularly in the area of international marketing, and that culture-specific content on tourism websites might indeed represent a motivational factor to potential visitors to the given country. On the other hand, the interviewees felt that Switzerland as a touristic destination can rely on its international reputation to draw touristic visitors, independently of web-based marketing tools and strategies.



## 7. Discussion of www.myswitzerland.com

As previously indicated, the author contends that the website in question does not adequately address core cultural issues as outlined above and in relation to the key inbound markets India, Germany, and China.

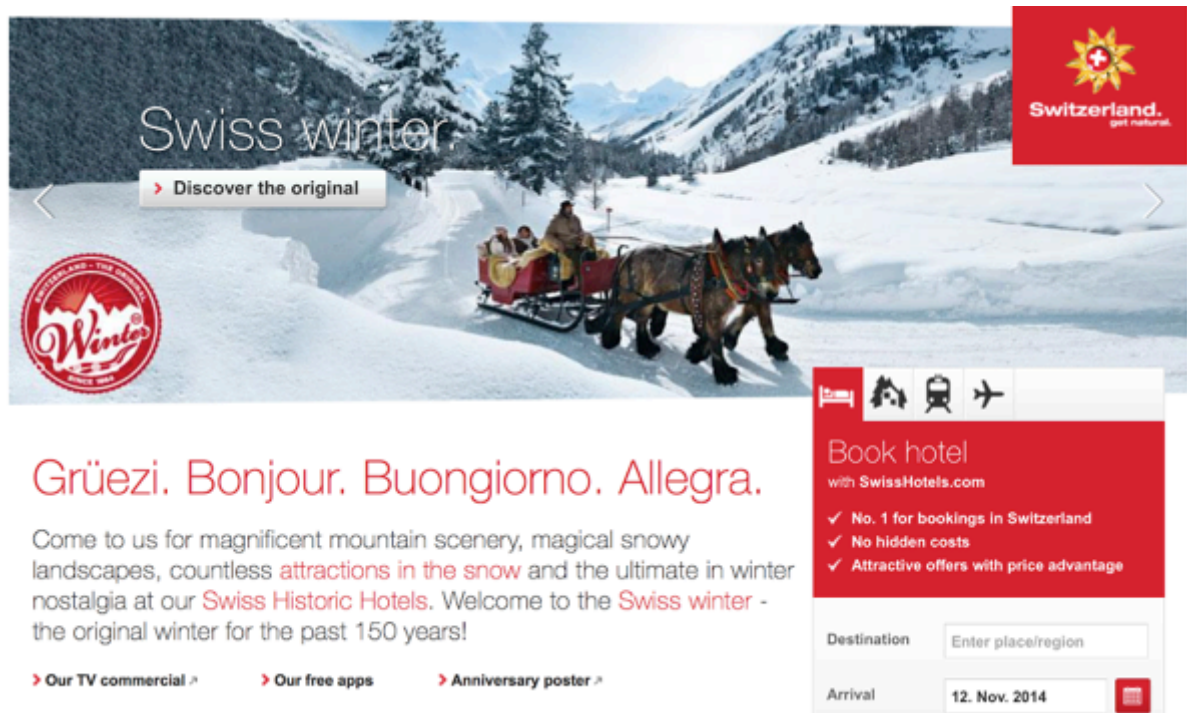
On the one hand, a comparison of the homepage of this website as it appears to Swiss visitors in the German language (see Figure 4 below) with the homepages as they are presented to visitors from India (Figure 5), Germany (Figure 6), and China (Figure 7) reveals that the content of said latter websites is identical to the content of the original Swiss homepage. To illustrate :

Figure 4: Swiss homepage



Source: Swiss Tourism (2014)

Figure 5: Indian homepage



Source: Swiss Tourism (2014)

Figure 6: German homepage



Source: Swiss Tourism (2014)

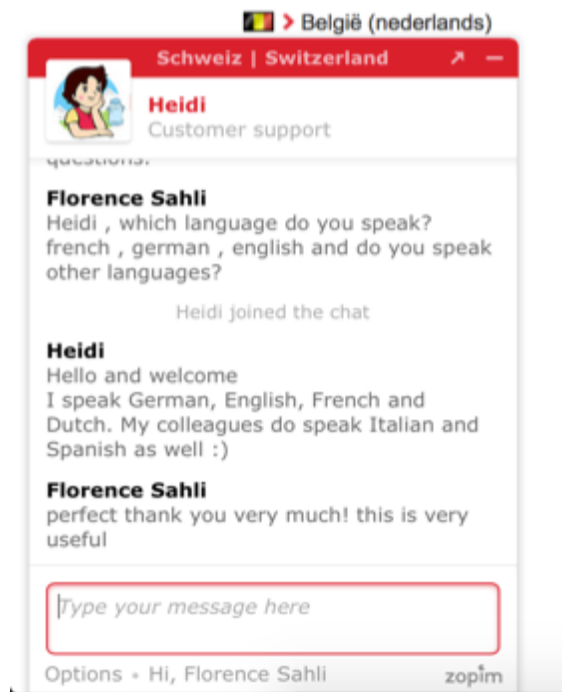
Figure 7: Chinese homepage



Source: Swiss Tourism (2014)

Further, in similarly technical terms, the chat window available on the Swiss homepage responds to queries only in German, French, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, and English (see Figure 8), whereas neither Hindi nor Mandarin are offered as media of communication.

Figure 8: Swiss homepage – chat window zopim

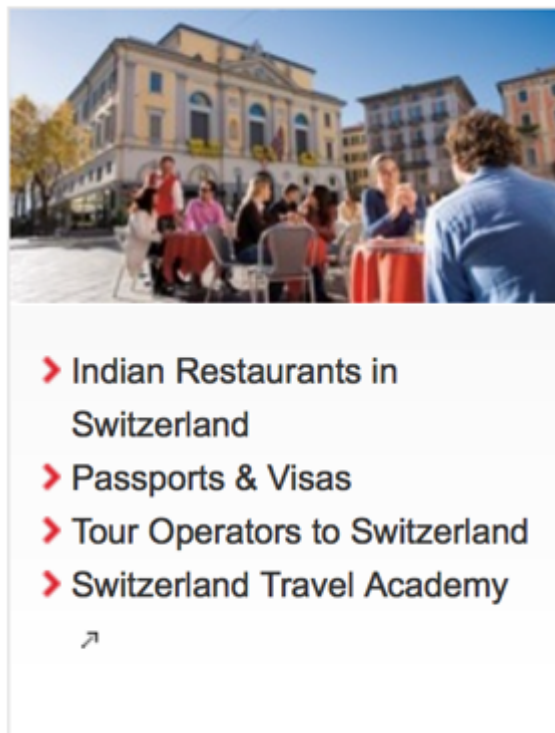


Source: Swiss Tourism (2014)

Moreover, the individual homepages offer only very limited country-specific additional information, such as in the case of India in the following section:

Figure 9: Indian homepage

## **Specials for India**



Source: Swiss Tourism (2014)

It should be noted at this point that neither the Germany nor China website offer even the most limited of similarly technical advice and information.

On the other hand, returning to the immediate present discussion, at no point does [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) attempt to provide any information providing a description of the core values and belief systems of the given target markets, which information could prove beneficial in terms of enhancing the motivation of potential visitors from said markets to regard Switzerland as a travel destination which is appealing not only on the physical level, but also on the more significant cultural, if not mythical level.

## 8. Comparative analysis of the official tourism websites of Norway and Australia with myswitzerland.com

An investigation of the official tourism websites of both Norway ([www.norway.info](http://www.norway.info)) and Australia ([www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com)) has shown clearly that both websites acknowledge the value of culture-specific information in terms of raising their country's appeal to potential visitors from India, Germany or China.

A direct comparison with [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com) shows that such culture- and country-specific information is lacking on the Swiss site.



## 8.1. Norway

For example, on the Norwegian site for interested parties from India, there is mention of the so-called Norway Week in Mumbai, as well as news about advances in treatment of newborns in the context of the Norway India Partnership Initiative on Health (see immediately below; the first image was retrieved on November 15, the second on December 1, as a reflection of the site's being continually updated).

### India: First page

Figure 10: India first page on Norwegian website, November 15, 2014



Source: Norway the official site on India (2014)

Figure 11: India first page on Norwegian site, December 1, 2014



### Family centered care for sick newborns: moving from evidence to practice

A consultation on family centered care for sick newborn was held on 28th November 2014 at RML Hospital in New Delhi. The consultation, organised by RML Hospital, was supported jointly by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Norway India Partnership Initiative on health (NIPI). [Read more](#)

Source: Norway the official site on India (2014)



### Germany: First page

In the aforementioned terms, the Norwegian site points to an exhibition by a prominent Norwegian painter to take place in Saarbrücken, as a cultural bridge between the two countries, as a not only rational but also emotional link, representing a source of appeal at subliminal level.

Figure 12: German first page on Norwegian Website

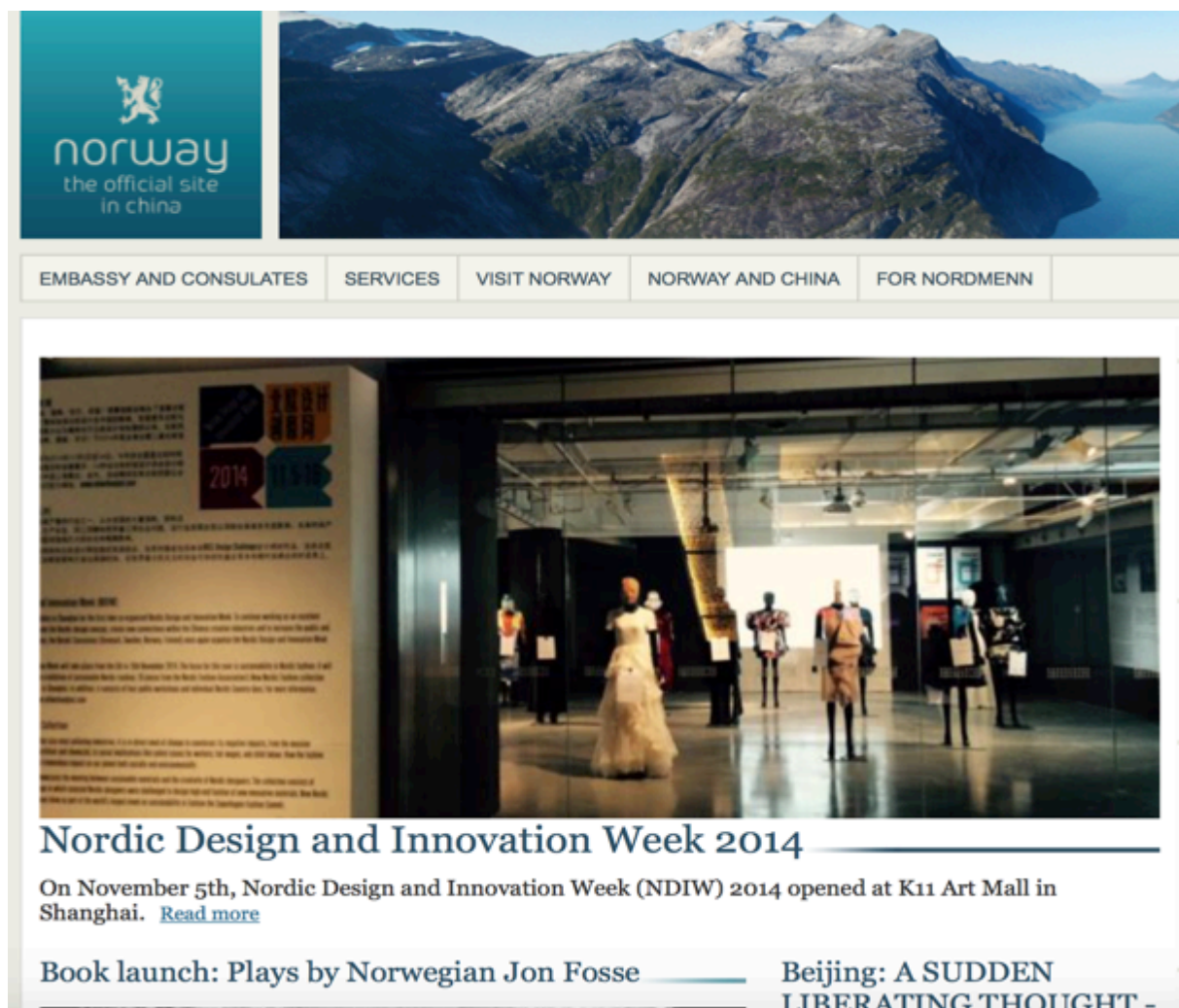


Source: Norway the official site on Germany (2014)

## China: First page

Similarly, the news regarding the Nordic Design and Innovation Week which opened on November 5 2014 in Shanghai creates a palpable atmosphere of commonality, a sense of community across cultural borders, a realization that Norway is indeed a partner, inviting the citizens of their partner China to personally partake of the value of shared interests, sharing mutuality created by mutually transcending politicisation and polarization.

Figure 13: Chinese page on Norwegian Website

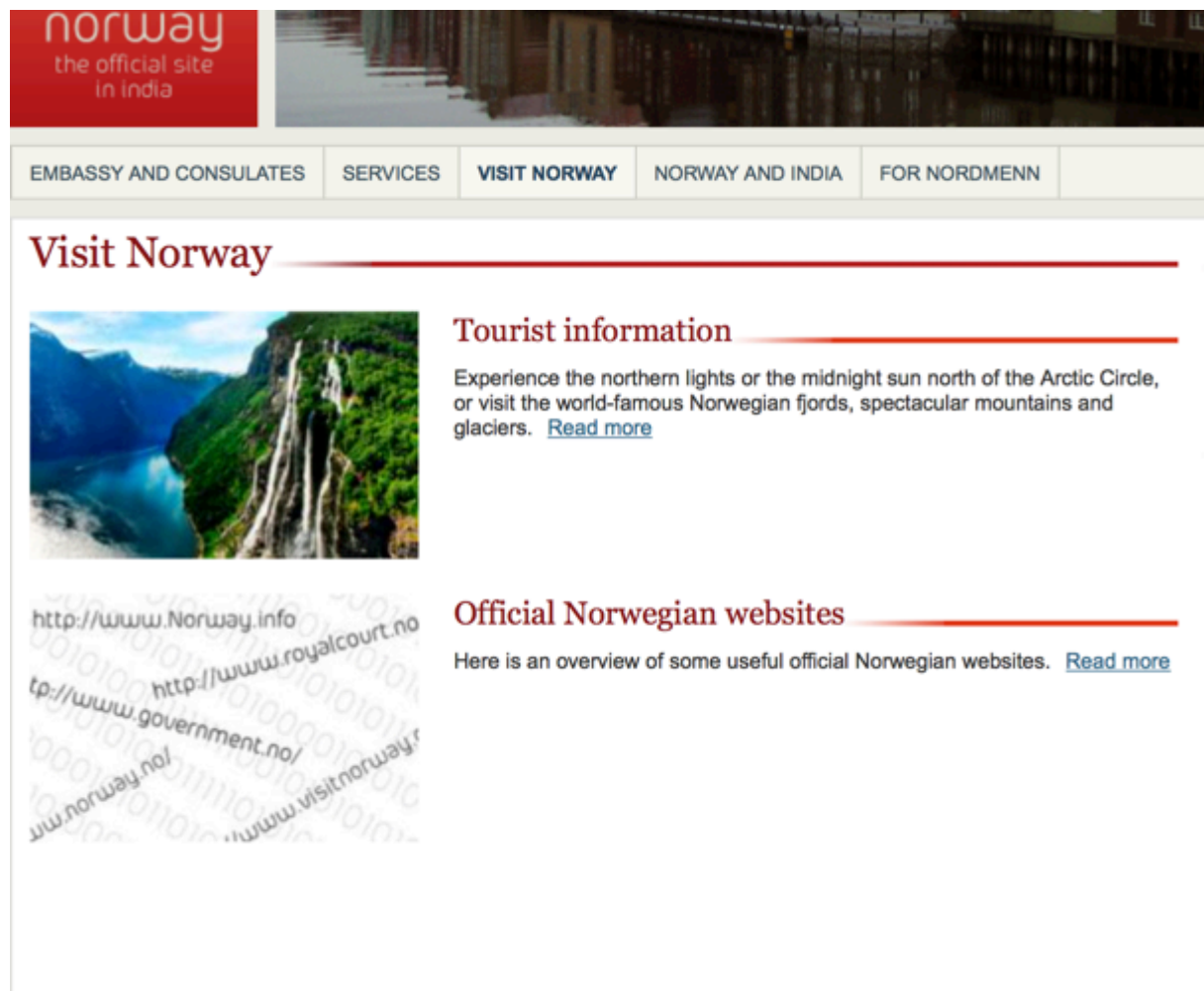


Source: Norway the official site on China (2014)

## India: Second page

On the second page, “Visit Norway”, you can see here that the information for Indian guests is basic. However, the same page, for German or Chinese guests, contains much specific information that could be in the interest of this particular target market.

Figure 14: Indian second page on Norwegian Website



Source: Norway the official site on India (2014)

## Germany: Second page

The official Norwegian tourism website highlights «camping», «Wirtschaft und Geld» and «Pass und Visum » as subjects of particular interest to German visitors to the site.

Figure 15: German second page on Norwegian Website

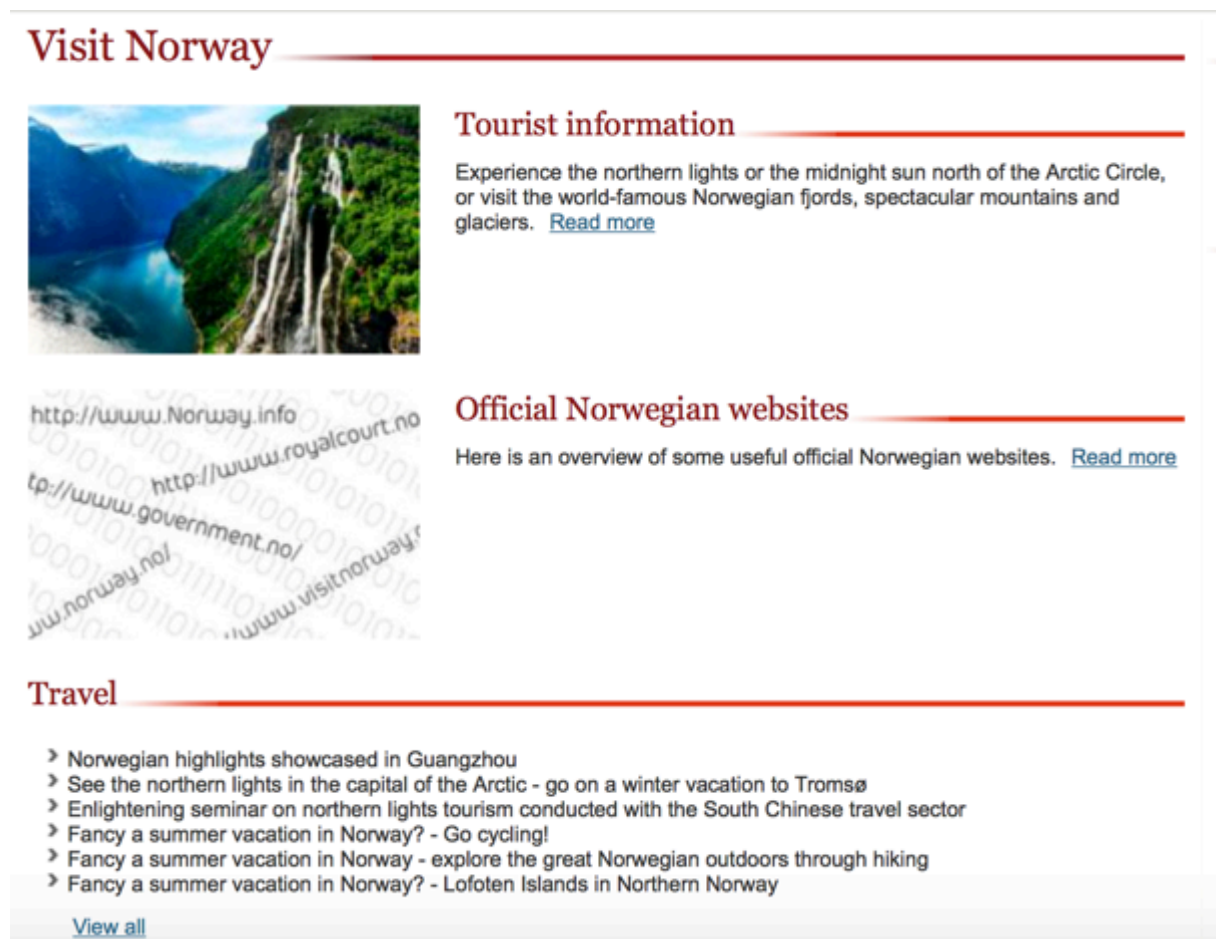


Source: Norway the official site on Germany (2014)

## China: Second page

The China page on the Norwegian tourism website provides a selection of specific activities that may be undertaken in Norway and which might appeal to Chinese visitors in particular. Interestingly, one activity is even conducted with the South Chinese travel sector. In any case, all of the activities involved are in fact group activities, which fact is of course a reflection of travel restrictions imposed on Chinese tourists by the Chinese government: Chinese people may leave their country only if they can document their participation in a group excursion which has been organized by a travel agency that is certified by the Chinese government to organize trips to foreign countries.

Figure 16: Chinese second page on Norwegian Website



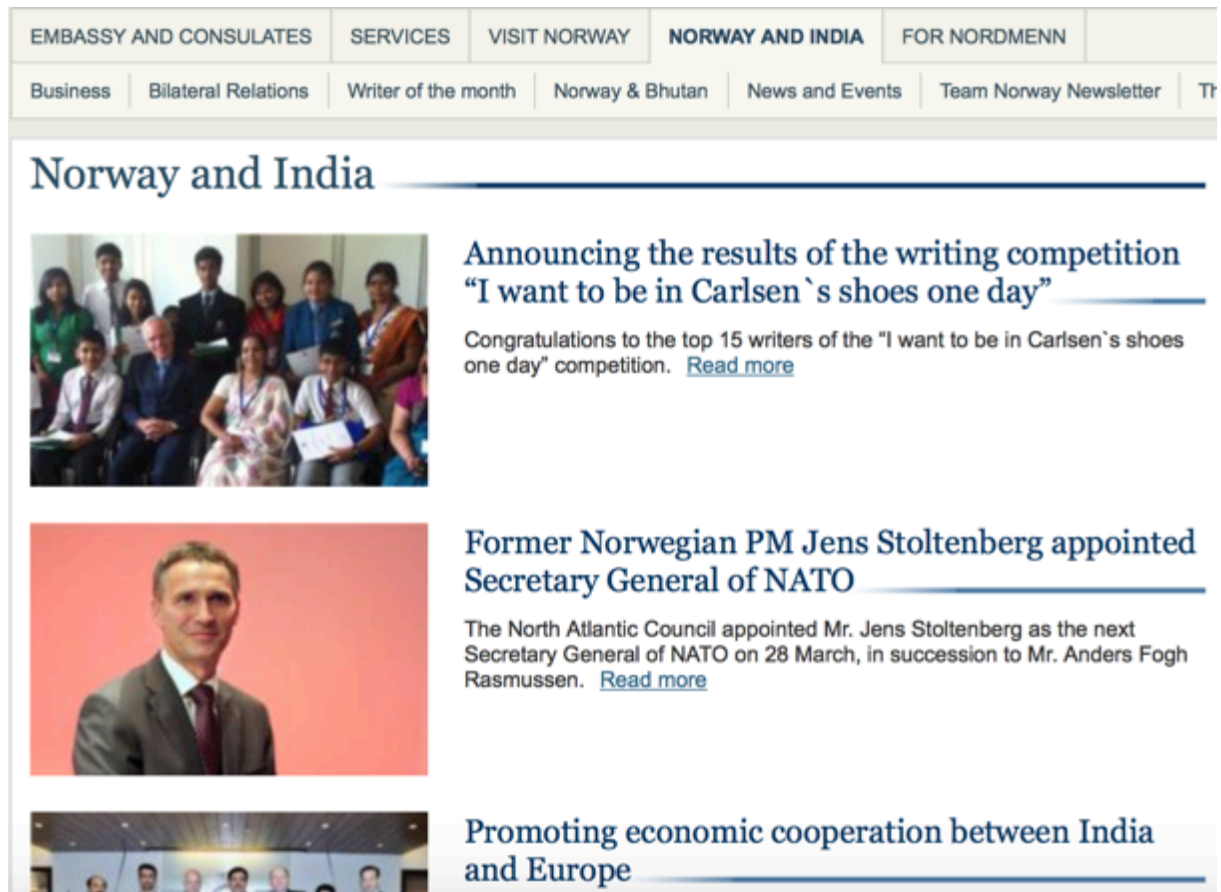
Source: Norway the official site on China (2014)



### India: Third page

Regarding potential visitors from India, the Norwegian site for India highlights various events over a broad spectrum of topics which all represent a link between the two countries.

Figure 17: Indian third page on Norwegian Website



Source: Norway the official site on India (2014)

### Germany: Third page

Similarly, the section of the Norwegian tourism site, which is intended to appeal to potential visitors from Germany, provides comprehensive information of interest to Germans, with an emphasis on cultural events intended to provide a bond between the two countries.

Figure 18: German third page on Norwegian Website

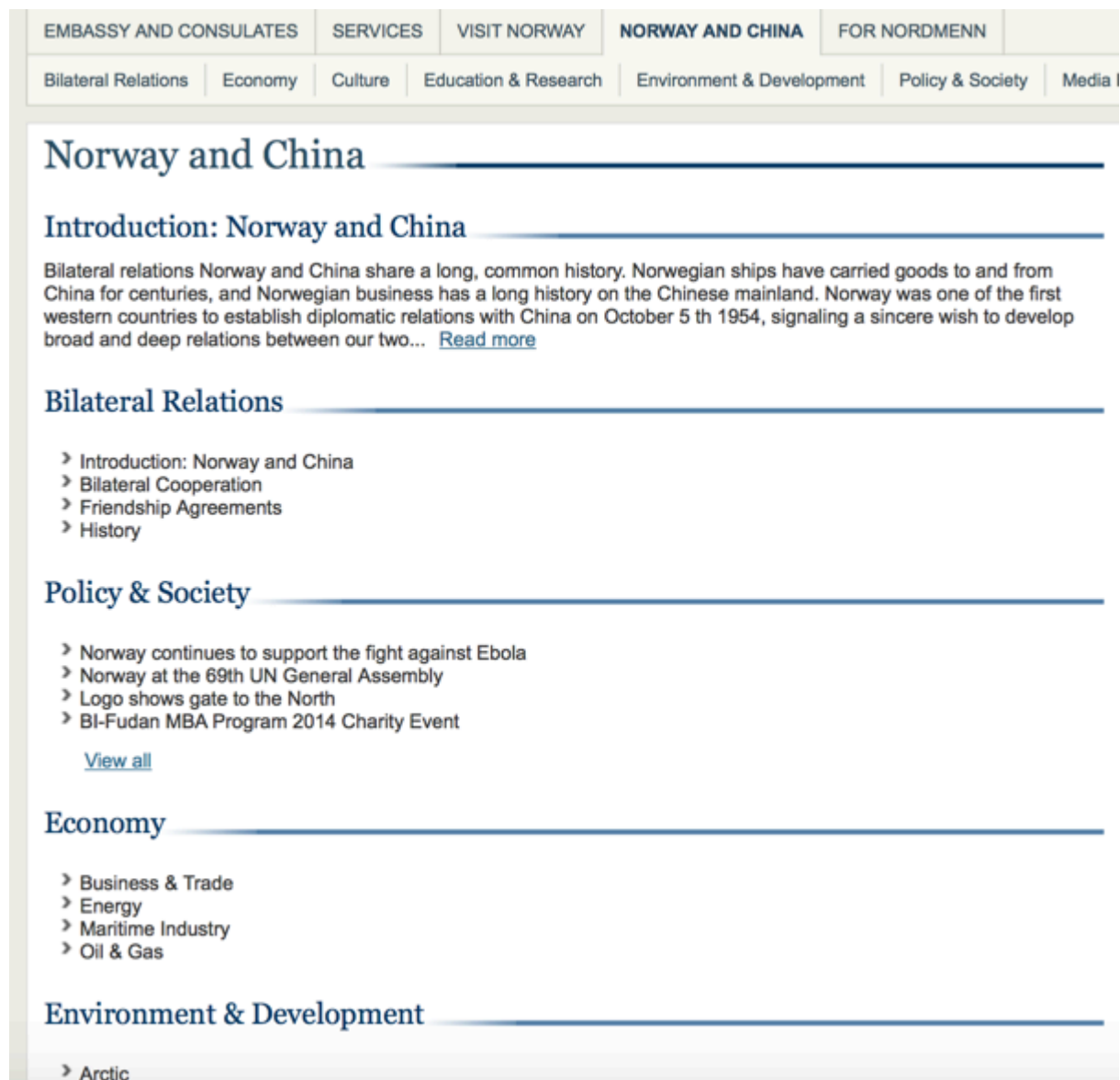


Source: Norway the official site on Germany (2014)

## China: Third page

Similarly, the section of the Norwegian tourism site, which is intended to appeal to potential visitors from China, provides comprehensive information of interest to Chinese, with an emphasis on Bilateral Relations intended to provide a bond between the two countries.

Figure 19: China third page on Norwegian Website



Source: Norway the official site on China (2014)



## 8.2. Australia

### India: Storytelling by prominent Indians

The official Australian tourism website capitalizes effectively on the power of personal testimonials on the part of prominent citizens of India who have travelled to Australia. Clearly, there are few marketing tools which are as effective in terms of inspiring other individuals from the same country to undertake a journey to Australia themselves.

Figure 20: Indian page on Australian Website



Nakuul Mehta

It was my first trip to Australia but I definitely look forward to visiting again, especially for the Cricket World Cup 2015, the finals of which will incidentally be held at the MCG in Melbourne where we shot for Pyar Ka Dard. Being a vegetarian, the highlight of my trip included indulging in some awesome vegetarian food during my stay. I had the most fun interacting with local Australians who were most friendly and warm. Driving along the Great Ocean Road was an amazing experience and in while in the city we also got the opportunity to be a part of an iconic event 'White Night' which was great. It was a fun trip and I thoroughly enjoyed myself.



Source: Australian the official site on India (2014)

### Germany

No specific page has been designed to attract visitors from Germany.

## China

Regarding attracting visitors from China, however, a very different picture presents itself on the Australian site, with relevance to the information about Chinese cultural dimensions as shown in Tables 1 and 2 : the country's relatively low uncertainty avoidance may be reflected in CMC by the use of a long page with a great deal of scrolling required.

Figure 21: Chinese page on Australian Website



Source: Australian the official site on China (2014)

## 9. Summary of Results

### 9.1. Substantiation of Primary and Secondary Hypothesis

To reiterate: The author's primary hypothesis is that Switzerland communicates its tourist services in a manner that many non-Swiss tourists do not understand. It is for this reason that the creation of a new model of communication which is intercultural in form and content is of paramount significance. To confirm this hypothesis, an analysis of the website [www.myswitzerland.ch](http://www.myswitzerland.ch) was undertaken, with an emphasis on how to communicate to different markets, products, and tourist services. Specific markets to be analyzed were India, Germany, and finally China, as these three countries contribute to the top five tourist arrivals in Switzerland. The author's secondary hypothesis addressed in this thesis is that Switzerland can be more successful in the tourism sector if key markets such as the three mentioned above are motivated and mobilized by forms of communication appealing to potential visitors at the level of their cultural value and belief systems which was discussed in terms of cultural levels and dimensions, and later in the paper, in terms of cultural markers.

In terms of a summary of results with respect to these hypotheses: On the one hand, [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com) includes a live chat window offering the opportunity to ask questions across the tourism spectrum, particularly with respect to travelling to Switzerland, and offers information pertinent to the latter in sixteen languages. On the other hand, the information offered in said sixteen languages represents a translation of one and the same basic text, with no adjustment to divergent cultural aspects from one target market to the other. To recapitulate, with reference to paragraph 7. Discussion of [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com): "At no point does [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) attempt to provide any information providing a description of the core values and belief systems of the given target markets, which information could prove beneficial in terms of enhancing the motivation of potential visitors from said markets to regard Switzerland as a travel destination which is appealing not only on the physical level, but also on the more significant cultural, if not mythical level" (page 35).

## **9.2. Limitations**

Firstly, the author is aware that additional research into cultural considerations in web design could be discussed and referenced in this immediate context, even while confirming that the materials referenced here are substantial in their own right.

Further, the author would have appreciated comments and suggestions from German, Indian and Chinese website experts as to how they would perhaps alter or change myschweiz.ch from their particular cultural perspectives, however, she was unable to personally reach any such individuals.

Moreover, various Swiss regional website professionals admitted, on the one hand, that their knowledge about intercultural issues was limited, and on the other, that their respective budgets would in fact not allow for any culture-specific adjustment to their respective websites above and beyond translating the basic Swiss text into other languages.

Additionally, the questionnaire employed by the author in her primary research activities presupposes a relatively substantial knowledge about intercultural aspects of marketing strategy.

Finally, the author would have wished to include personal commentary on the part of German, Indian and Chinese visitors to Switzerland as to their perception of myschweiz.ch in terms of its effectiveness as a marketing tool, i.e., whether myschweiz.ch had played any role in their decision to visit the country. However, she was not able to identify willing subjects.

## **9.3. Outlook**

The author is of the firm conviction that the subject matter under discussion is of great significance in view of the increasingly international nature of today's world and the challenges involved with handling tourism problems such as declining inbound tourist numbers in Switzerland.

Further, the author proposes that said problems may be rectified by consciously adding culture-specific content to myschweiz.ch, while providing a pertinent theoretical basis,

as she has done in this present paper, and most significantly, by substantially expanding her research with the intention of making more company-specific recommendations to enterprises involved in tourism marketing. The author believes that much can still be achieved in this domain.

## 10. A proposal for myswitzerland.com

The author would like to offer the following suggestions, in the name of myswitzerland.com capitalizing on its prominent role in Swiss tourism marketing by creating an increased sense of community and partnership across cultural borders, as a sincerely proffered invitation to the citizens of India, Germany and China by way of designing expressly culture-specific individual pages which appeal at both a rational and emotional level to those cultural regions, which individual pages could include the following aspects:

### 10.1. India

#### 10.1.1. Highlight mutual projects between Switzerland and India:

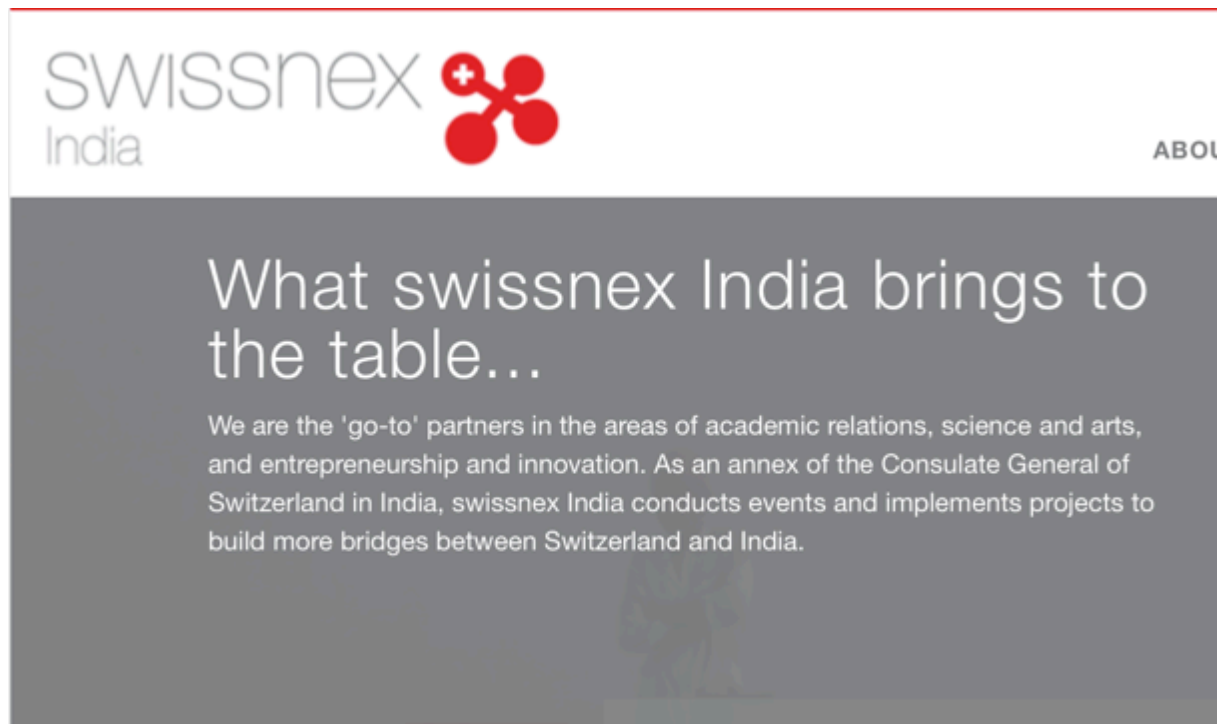
Figure 22: Project between Switzerland and India



Source: Swisssaide (2014)

10.1.2 Provide up-to-date news about Swiss organisations active in India:

**Figure 23: Swiss organisation active in India**



Source: Swissnex India (2014)



## 10.2. Germany

### 10.2.1 Highlighting mutual cultural interests:

Figure 24: Oktoberfest in Bern



Source: Oktoberfest Bern (2014)



### 10.2.2 Pointing out historical connections:

Figure 25: Historical event between Germany and Switzerland



Source: Events und Kongresse (2014)

## 10.3. China

10.3.1 Providing up-to-date news about political-economic developments involving Switzerland and China:

Figure 26: News about political-economic developments involving Switzerland and China

### Switzerland and China celebrate the entry into force of their free trade agreement

**Bern, 01.07.2014 - Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann opened the ceremony to mark the entry into force of the free trade agreement between Switzerland and China at the Rhine port in Basel on Tuesday afternoon. This is the most important free trade agreement for Swiss foreign trade since the agreement with the European Union in 1972.**

The comprehensive free trade agreement between Switzerland and China enters into force on 1 July 2014, almost a year to the day since Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann and his Chinese counterpart, Minister of Commerce Gao Hucheng, signed the agreement in Beijing on 6 July 2013. Swiss business, especially the export industry, has been keenly awaiting this day because its access to the Chinese market improves compared to that of its European competitors.

Source: The Federal Authorities (2014)

### 10.3.2 Highlighting personal stories linking the two countries:

Figure 27: Personal stories between China and Switzerland



**Liam Bates' childhood was typically Swiss. But somewhere along the line his life took an unusual turn – because for Chinese television viewers he's become Li Mu, presenter of adventure programmes.**

He has taken his audience to visit the remotest corners of China, to see the flower-men of Indonesia, and to ride the steam train over Switzerland's Furka pass.

Liam's style is hands-on – something that takes on a new meaning when we're talking about grilling a snake on a camp fire just after cutting its head off. Or eating wild ants. Or setting off to chase monkeys with a bolt of poisoned arrows.

Liam does it all in a Swiss army t-shirt or a loincloth fashioned out of tree bark...and he does it all in an impeccable Mandarin, in front of an ever-present camera.

Roger Federer is probably the best-known Swiss in China. But 25-year-old Liam definitely has a Chinese following. While in a bistro, dressed in military uniform and a gun slung over his shoulder, he was recognised by two Chinese students who made a major life decision thanks to him.

Source: Swissinfo (2014)

Further, the author would like to propose, with reference to 5.1 Diagrammatic comparison, 5.2 Indicators of High Power Distance in Website Design, 5.3 Indicators of High Collectivism in Website Design, 5.4 Indicators of High Femininity in Website Design, and 5.5 Indicators of High Uncertainty Avoidance in Website Design, that the culture-specific pages dedicated to India, Germany and China be designed with an eye to the significance of Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the given culture, e.g., considering China's high score in Power Distance and the related tendency on the part of Chinese people to be impressed with monumental buildings, i.e., that photos of the Swiss Palais Fédéral in Bern be included in the China-specific web page.

Finally, the author would like to suggest that myswitzerland.com approach web design professionals from India, Germany and China with the intention of obtaining culture- and therefore market-specific advice with respect to a more effective approach in terms of appealing to international audiences in general, and the three target markets in particular.

## Conclusion

In view of the importance of the tourism industry in Switzerland, it would seem that the methods by which tourism is promoted in this country would need to be subject to ongoing development and innovative measures. On the one hand, [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com) includes a live chat window offering the opportunity to ask questions across the tourism spectrum, particularly with respect to travelling to Switzerland, and offers information pertinent to the latter in sixteen languages. On the other hand, the information offered in said sixteen languages represents a translation of one and the same basic text, with no adjustment to divergent cultural aspects from one target market to the other. To recapitulate, with reference to chapter 7. Discussion of [myswitzerland](http://myswitzerland.com) (p. 35): “At no point does [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) attempt to provide any information providing a description of the core values and belief systems of the given target markets, which information could prove beneficial in terms of enhancing the motivation of potential visitors from said markets to regard Switzerland as a travel destination which is appealing not only on the physical level, but also on the more significant cultural, if not mythical level.”

Clearly, computer-mediated communication plays a prominent role in making Switzerland’s attractiveness palpable to a broad audience, what with the worldwide web having long since become the world’s communicative medium of choice. In these terms, [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) is surely the avenue by which most of the world would seek to inform themselves about Switzerland in greater detail. As already proposed on p. 57, the author would like to reiterate that she would think it useful if [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com) were to seek the advice of web design professionals from India, Germany and China in order that [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) become a more effective tool of marketing communication.

With this proposal, as a reflection of the findings of the research outlined in this thesis, it is the author’s intention to initiate a constructive discussion by which a contribution could be made towards reversing the decline of the number of touristic visitors to Switzerland from Germany, India, and China.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I

#### **Hôtellerie<sup>1</sup>: arrivées et nuitées en Suisse selon la provenance des hôtes**

Valeurs cumulées janvier-septembre 2014

Pays d'origine	2014		2013	
	Arrivées	Nuitées	Arrivées	Nuitées
Suisse	6'211'702	12'596'266	6'175'842	12'621'682
Allemagne	1'448'622	3'579'169	1'500'648	3'752'284
Royaume-Uni	572'938	1'363'855	564'195	1'350'822
Etats-Unis d'Amérique	617'018	1'342'416	596'500	1'295'523
France	540'174	1'050'389	528'105	1'050'908
Chine (sans Hongkong)	650'003	812'014	568'786	717'869
Italie	376'114	776'968	373'091	754'383
Pays-Bas	247'362	570'217	249'795	597'363
Belgique	173'683	538'224	178'013	558'173
Russie	155'288	429'789	170'287	463'378
Inde	187'623	415'381	191'288	414'149
Japon	222'154	387'035	259'619	441'858
Autres pays	2'113'428	4'780'818	2'026'664	4'607'065
<b>Total</b>	<b>13'516'109</b>	<b>28'642'541</b>	<b>13'382'833</b>	<b>28'625'457</b>

Source: <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/10/03/blank/key/02/01.html>

## Appendix II

# Questionnaire sur la communication touristique ciblée

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*La rencontre du champ « la communication » et « tourisme » appelle à une série de réflexion.*

Ces questions sont subjectives. Il n'y a pas de fausse réponse. En vous remerciant d'avance du temps consacré au questionnaire.

1. En quoi la communication touristique diffère de la communication au sens large du terme ?
2. Comment, vous professionnel du tourisme, concevez vous cette communication, notamment avec les technologies de l'information et de la communication ? (comment voyez-vous l'évolution et les principaux défis à relever ces prochaines années ?)
3. Quand vous entendez « la communication touristique est aussi un exemple particulièrement intéressant de communication interculturelle. Un domaine qui reste un domaine largement inexploré. » ? Qu'en pensez-vous ? Qu'avez-vous à dire à ce sujet ?
4. Quels sont les développements récents des sciences de l'information et de la communication qui peuvent trouver une application dans le tourisme ?

5. A votre avis, quels sont les éléments qui poussent les touristes à quitter leur lieu de résidence et venir en Suisse, plus spécifiquement dans votre région (après visualisation de votre site internet)
6. Comment sont aujourd'hui construits les sites web des professionnels du tourisme ?
7. Pensez vous que la culture de l'internaute modifie la valeur de l'information trouvée sur votre site ( [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)) ?
8. Pensez vous que certain internautes sont très satisfaits avec votre site ([www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)) et les informations qu'ils y trouvent et d'autres moins satisfait du à leur culture ?
9. Comment se fait l'accueil de internautes de langue ou de culture étrangère sur un site internet ?
10. Quels sont pour vous les de sites internet d'excellence, faisant la promotion d'une destination touristique ? Et pourquoi ?
11. Sont ils culturellement ciblé ?

### Appendix III

# Questionnaire about intercultural communication in web design

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1. In what terms does tourism communication differ from communication in the broadest sense of the term?
2. How do you as a professional in the tourism industry perceive communication as practiced in today's world, especially with the new technologies in communication? How do you see the evolution and major challenges in the coming years in the tourism industry?)
3. When you hear "tourist communication is a particularly interesting example of intercultural communication, an area that remains largely unexplored", what do you think?
4. What do you perceive as recent developments in information sciences and communication, which could find application in tourism in particular?
5. In your opinion, what are the elements that motivate tourists to leave their home and come to Switzerland, especially in terms of their response to the website [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)?
6. Do you think the (ethnic) culture of the user has a bearing on the content and value of the information provided on [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com), i.e., would the inclusion of information related to cultural value and belief systems characteristic of a given cultural region perhaps prove important as an element of motivation to the given user?

7. Do you think that some users are very satisfied with [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) in terms of the information they find seen before a cultural backdrop, whereas others might be less satisfied in the latter terms?
8. From your point of view, which official tourism website do you regard as excellent, and why ?
9. Is cultural focus a key element in the given website? If so, in which form, and with which content ?

## Appendix IV

### Questionnaire sur la communication touristique ciblée - Mélanie Schmutz

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*La rencontre du champ « la communication » et « tourisme » appelle à une série de réflexion.*

Ces questions sont subjectives. Il n'y a pas de fausse réponse. En vous remerciant d'avance du temps consacré au questionnaire.

1. En quoi la communication touristique diffère de la communication au sens large du terme ?

Dans le tourisme il faut toujours trouver des idées originales, elles doivent être innovatrices.

La communication doit aller dans les deux sens. B to C.

Trip advisor, les commentaires des clients sont importants afin d'améliorer l'offre.

2. Comment, vous professionnel du tourisme, concevez vous cette communication, notamment avec les technologies de l'information et de la communication ? (comment voyez-vous l'évolution et les principaux défis à relever ces prochaines années ?)

Il faut toujours suivre les évolutions. Pour rester attractif. Tout ce qui se passe sur les tablettes. Fribourg région a fait une application afin d'être au top de la pointe. Adapter le site internet pour les Smartphones.

3. Quand vous entendez « la communication touristique est aussi un exemple particulièrement intéressant de communication interculturelle. Un domaine qui reste un domaine largement inexploré. » ? Qu'en pensez-vous ? Qu'avez-vous à dire à ce sujet ?



Elle est totalement d'accord. C'est important mais Fribourg Région n'y touche pas. Le marché principal de Fribourg Régions est le marché suisses, les allemands, les italiens et les Français.

4. Quels sont les développements récents des sciences de l'information et de la communication qui peuvent trouver une application dans le tourisme ?

Les applications Smartphones

→ Mycity de Vaud (c'est selon les besoins)

trip advisor

5. A votre avis, quels sont les éléments qui poussent les touristes à quitter leur lieu de résidence et venir en Suisse, plus spécifiquement dans votre région ( après visualisation de votre site internet)

Pour Fribourg Région c'est la nature et les traditions

6. Comment sont aujourd'hui construits les sites web des professionnels du tourisme ?

Il faut jouer avec les images et les émotions, et surtout les video.

7. Comment pensez vous que la culture de l'internaute modifie la valeur de l'information trouvée sur votre site ?

Oui elle pense que la culture joue un rôle. Elle pense aussi que la personnalité joue un rôle.

8. Pensez vous que certain internautes sont très satisfaits avec votre site et les informations qu'ils y trouvent et d'autres moins satisfait du à leur culture ?

9. Quels sont les retours que vous avez par rapport à votre site ?

Les retours sont surtout fait par les suisses. Par déduction les gens ne sont pas très satisfaits ni très déçu. Mais sur le site internet il n'y a pas vraiment de retour des autres cultures.

10. Comment se fait l'accueil de internautes de langue ou de culture étrangère sur un site internet ?

Pareil dans une autre langue, spécifiquement en anglais. Pour diminuer les couts pour ceux qui ne parleraient pas bien l'anglais, la vidéo est la meilleure solution.

11. Quels sont pour vous les sites internet idéals, faisant la promotion d'une destination touristique ? Et pourquoi ?

Les grisons/ le nouveau site pour le valais.

12. Sont ils culturellement ciblé ?

Non, pas à ma connaissance.

## Appendix V

### Questionnaire sur la communication touristique ciblée – Giles Dind

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*La rencontre du champ « la communication » et « tourisme » appelle à une série de réflexion.*

Ces questions sont subjectives. Il n'y a pas de fausse réponse. En vous remerciant d'avance du temps consacré au questionnaire.

1. En quoi la communication touristique diffère de la communication au sens large du terme ?

Elle doit transmettre un contenu et des émotions. Les marques de grande consommation font souvent du branding (renforcement de la marque) pour accroître leur attractivité. En tourisme cela ne suffit pas, il faut aussi savoir donner des motifs concrets de voyage, en plus de l'émotion.

2. Comment, vous professionnel du tourisme, concevez vous cette communication, notamment avec les technologies de l'information et de la communication ? (comment voyez-vous l'évolution et les principaux défis à relever ces prochaines années ?)

Elle doit rester multi-canaux. La prédominance des canaux digitaux ne doit pas faire oublier l'importance des médias classiques (print, tv, direct marketing, etc.). En effet l'émotion est parfois difficile à faire passer via le digital. Le grand défi est la surinformation et la multiplication des canaux d'information. Les gens sont inondés d'information et de messages publicitaires. Comment faire sa place et ressortir ? Cela passe par le story-telling.

3. Quand vous entendez « la communication touristique est aussi un exemple particulièrement intéressant de communication interculturelle. Un domaine qui reste un domaine largement inexploré. » ? Qu'en pensez-vous ? Qu'avez-vous à dire à ce sujet ?

Il faut adapter le message à son public. Un japonais n'a pas les mêmes besoins qu'un chinois et encore moins qu'un allemand. Une communication uniforme vers tous ses marchés perd de son impact. Au-delà de cela, il faut tenter de construire des ponts, jouer sur les liens culturels pour gagner en sympathie et attractivité.

4. Quels sont les développements récents des sciences de l'information et de la communication qui peuvent trouver une application dans le tourisme ?

Certainement la réalité augmentée ainsi que les outils tels que les Google Glass. Les formats mobiles (digitaux) sont évidemment amenés à gagner encore plus d'importance.

5. A votre avis, quels sont les éléments qui poussent les touristes à quitter leur lieu de résidence et venir en Suisse, plus spécifiquement dans votre région ( après visualisation de votre site internet) ?

Les études le disent: la nature et l'authenticité. Ajouté à cela des expériences uniques comme les trains panoramiques. Les villes sont cependant les destinations en pleine croissance.

6. Comment sont aujourd'hui construits les sites web des professionnels du tourisme ?

Parfois trop informatifs et pas assez émotionnels. Il ne faut pas surestimer la connaissance qu'à l'internaute de sa destination. Il faut donner envie.

7. Pensez vous que la culture de l'internaute modifie la valeur de l'information trouvée sur votre site ?

Bien sûr. Les degrés de connaissance varient, les attentes et besoins aussi. Le monde iconographique varie d'un pays et contiennent à l'autre. Il est cependant impossible de créer de multiples sites internet. Il faut donc trouver une sorte de communication universelle, ce qui n'est pas facile.

8. Pensez vous que certain internautes sont très satisfaits avec votre site et les informations qu'ils y trouvent et d'autres moins satisfait du à leur culture ?

Notre site MySwitzerland.com gagne régulièrement des prix et se situe clairement comme un des meilleurs sites mondiaux en terme de pays. Donc oui, à priori le client y trouve satisfaction.

9. Comment se fait l'accueil de internautes de langue ou de culture étrangère sur un site internet ?

Dans sa langue idéalement, et avec un mot de bienvenue. C'est ce que nous faisons sur notre site.

10. Quels sont pour vous les de sites internet d'excellence, faisant la promotion d'une destination touristique ? Et pourquoi ?

La Norvège et l'Australie ont de bons sites.

11. Sont ils culturellement ciblé ?

Non, pas spécialement à ma connaissance.

## Appendix VI

### Questionnaire about intercultural communication in web design – Carrol Jordan

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1. In what terms does tourism communication differ from communication in the broadest sense of the term?

Tourism is a people industry. We live in an era of rapid globalization in which being able to communicate across cultures, with foreigners from all over the world. Tourism communication is about **intercultural** communication. Focussing on the cultural differences.

2. How do you as a professional in the tourism industry perceive communication as practiced in today's world, especially with the new technologies in communication? How do you see the evolution and major challenges in the coming years in the tourism industry?)

I feel that a lot people still think that our world is essentially a global village. Thanks to transport and communication technology, individuals from all over the world can meet, and can conduct profitable trade but we should not forget that existing local, sociocultural context stays a critical factor in mediating the globalization process in a specific context. And that we have to see it as a challenge. We need to be aware that the new technologies in communication are silence communication, the nonverbal communication is lost and that makes it difficult to understand the information.

3. When you hear "tourist communication is a particularly interesting example of intercultural communication, an area that remains largely unexplored", what do you think?

I fully agree with that. A lot of research has shown the importance about Intercultural communication. The people in practice should pick up this research and put it in practice and develop specific marketing strategies that fit in a particular culture. But agree that is not easy. We need more research on cultural differences in the tourism field about differences across nations and the impact on tourist behaviour.

4. What do you perceive as recent developments in information sciences and communication, which could find application in tourism in particular?

I am not so familiar in the recent developments in information sciences. But we need a more intercultural communication style that focus more on both perspectives ( sender and receiver)

as a dialog not a monolog. Perhaps a more sharing site where information can be shared for example a chat site.

5. In your opinion, what are the elements that motivate tourists to leave their home and come to Switzerland, especially in terms of their response to the website [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)?

After viewing the website: The website emphasizes on Nature, beautiful landscapes, sport skiing, visiting cities but there is more, foreigners come to Switzerland for more reasons (depending on culture), enjoy nature, doing sport, hiking and skiing, but also for shopping (buying luxury goods), and visiting the heart of Europe, Switzerland is a safe country for sightseeing and so on.

6. Do you think the (ethnic) culture of the user has a bearing on the content and value of the information provided on [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com), i.e., would the inclusion of information related to cultural value and belief systems characteristic of a given cultural region perhaps prove important as an element of motivation to the given user?

The website looks very nice. Often the same website for all the different nationalities has been used only the language has changed. There are some different sites for different cultures.

Promoting, advertising should emphasize the specific needs, themes of the different tourists from different countries. (Marketing segmentation) For example marketing strategies for Asian tourists should focus on team spirit, as group travelling and the needs for family. For Asian also security is very important and they love shopping ((what could be more exciting than doing this in the heart of Europe) and sightseeing. I did not see anything on the website about customer services, different cultures have different perceptions of service quality, if you know the differences you could more emphasize on that.

7. Do you think that some users are very satisfied with [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) in terms of the information they find seen before a cultural backdrop, whereas others might be less satisfied in the latter terms?

Overall users will be satisfied. Website is designed very well, there is also a possibility to chat and create a dialog. There have been identified some cultural differences and preferences for Asian tourists but I haven't seen differences between the European countries and Arab countries and consequently different preferences between the European tourists and for the Arab tourists. So it is important to identify the cultural differences and the concrete impact of those differences on the tourist behaviours to be even more effective.

8. From your point of view, which official tourism website do you regard as excellent, and why?

I have looked at different websites and was surprised that most of them were very general, paying very less attention to cultural differences. Actually [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) compared to a lot of other website is really good and culturally targeted.

9. Is cultural focus a key element in the given website? If so, in which form, and with which content?

There are parts that are culturally targeted, for example some of the Asian sites, there is a video for example that shows the importance of group spirit (very important for Asian), shows more beautiful cities (Asians love shopping and sightseeing) and less winter skiing what could be perceived as dangerous by Asian tourists (they do not like taking risks). I think the focus of the website is on the design first, then on culture.



## Appendix VII

### Questionnaire about intercultural communication in web design – Dr. Fabian Weber

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1. In what terms does tourism communication differ from communication in the broadest sense of the term?

Tourism communication is normally marketing communication. It not only about the information, but about fascinating and attracting people.

2. How do you as a professional in the tourism industry perceive communication as practiced in today's world, especially with the new technologies in communication? How do you see the evolution and major challenges in the coming years in the tourism industry?)

The rise of online communication and of its importance for the travel industry is and will be a major challenge for the industry. With more different communication channels and different cultures involved tourism communication will get even more complex.

3. When you hear "tourist communication is a particularly interesting example of intercultural communication, an area that remains largely unexplored", what is your opinion about this?

I haven't thought about this from a scientific perspective yet, and I'm not able to judge whether intercultural tourist communication really deiffers that much from 'normal' intercultural communication.

4. What do you perceive as recent developments in information sciences and communication, which could find application in tourism in particular?

Most of the suitable innovations also arrive in tourism sooner or later. I think we might observe a further increase in mobile communication, mobile payments, mobile check-in, etc.

5. In your opinion, what are the elements that motivate tourists to leave their home and come to Switzerland, especially in terms of their response to the website [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)?

The good reputation of Switzerland as a holiday destination and its natural attractions are the main reasons for tourists to come to CH. I don't think that [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com) plays an important role in the travel decision, but it's helpful of course to find the information needed to organise the trip.

6. Do you think the (ethnic) culture of the user has a bearing on the content and value of the information provided on [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com), i.e., would the inclusion of information related to cultural value and belief systems characteristic of a given cultural region perhaps prove important as an element of motivation to the given user?

I don't think this information is crucial for the travel decision, but it might be a nice extra to find such information as well.

7. Do you think that some users are very satisfied with [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) in terms of the information they find seen before a cultural backdrop, whereas others might be less satisfied in the latter terms?

I'm quite sure some users are satisfied whereas others aren't. However, I'm not able to judge about the degree of satisfaction of the users.

8. From your point of view, which official tourism website do you regard as excellent, and why?

I'm not able to designate a best practice website. The website of the lake Geneva region makes quite a good impression to me: <http://www.lake-geneva-region.ch/de/index.cfm>

9. Is cultural focus a key element in the given website? If so, in which form, and with which content?

No, it's not.

## Appendix VIII

### Questionnaire about intercultural communication in web design – Lan Zhu

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1. In what terms does tourism communication differ from communication in the broadest sense of the term?

Tourism communication has 2 functions: inform and attract, compared to communication, which is basically and generally to inform.

2. How do you as a professional in the tourism industry perceive communication as practiced in today's world, especially with the new technologies in communication? How do you see the evolution and major challenges in the coming years in the tourism industry?)

Communication goes personally and mobility. Personally means to inform on purpose: the information concerns the interest of each individual target. Mobility means that the target could get information on going or even the information is pushed instantly on going.

The technology like GPS geolocation will be used more and more frequently. And the technology will be applied more and more in the applications on mobile devices.

3. When you hear "tourist communication is a particularly interesting example of intercultural communication, an area that remains largely unexplored." What is your opinion about this?

Yes or no. Yes is for foreigner tourists, the intercultural communication may be more personally. No is for domestic tourists, they are concentrated firstly on more convenient services.

4. What do you perceive as recent developments in information sciences and communication, which could find application in tourism in particular?

GPS geolocation to communicate where I am and what is around me.

5. In your opinion, what are the elements that motivate tourists to leave their home and come to Switzerland, especially in terms of their response to the website [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)?

An attractive catalogue of products and services

6. Do you think the (ethnic) culture of the user has a bearing on the content and value of the information provided on [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com), i.e., would the inclusion of information related to cultural value and belief systems characteristic of a given cultural region perhaps prove important as an element of motivation to the given user?

Of course.

7. Do you think that some users are very satisfied with [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) in terms of the information they find seen before a cultural backdrop, whereas others might be less satisfied in the latter terms?

I don't know.

8. From your point of view, which official tourism website do you regard as excellent, and why?

Functionally and user-friendly speaking, my Switzerland is a good web site.

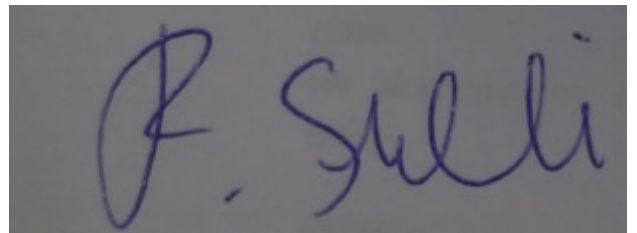
9. Is cultural focus a key element in the given website? If so, in which form, and with which content?

Yes, the website is multi-language.

## Author's declaration

I hereby certify that I have written the present Bachelor's thesis on my own, without any help other than listed in the reference section, and that I have not used any sources other than the ones specifically mentioned. I will not give any copies of this report to anyone without the authorisation of both the RF and the supervisor of the Bachelor's thesis. This includes the applied research partner with whom I have worked.

Sahli Florence

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'F. Sahli', on a dark grey background.